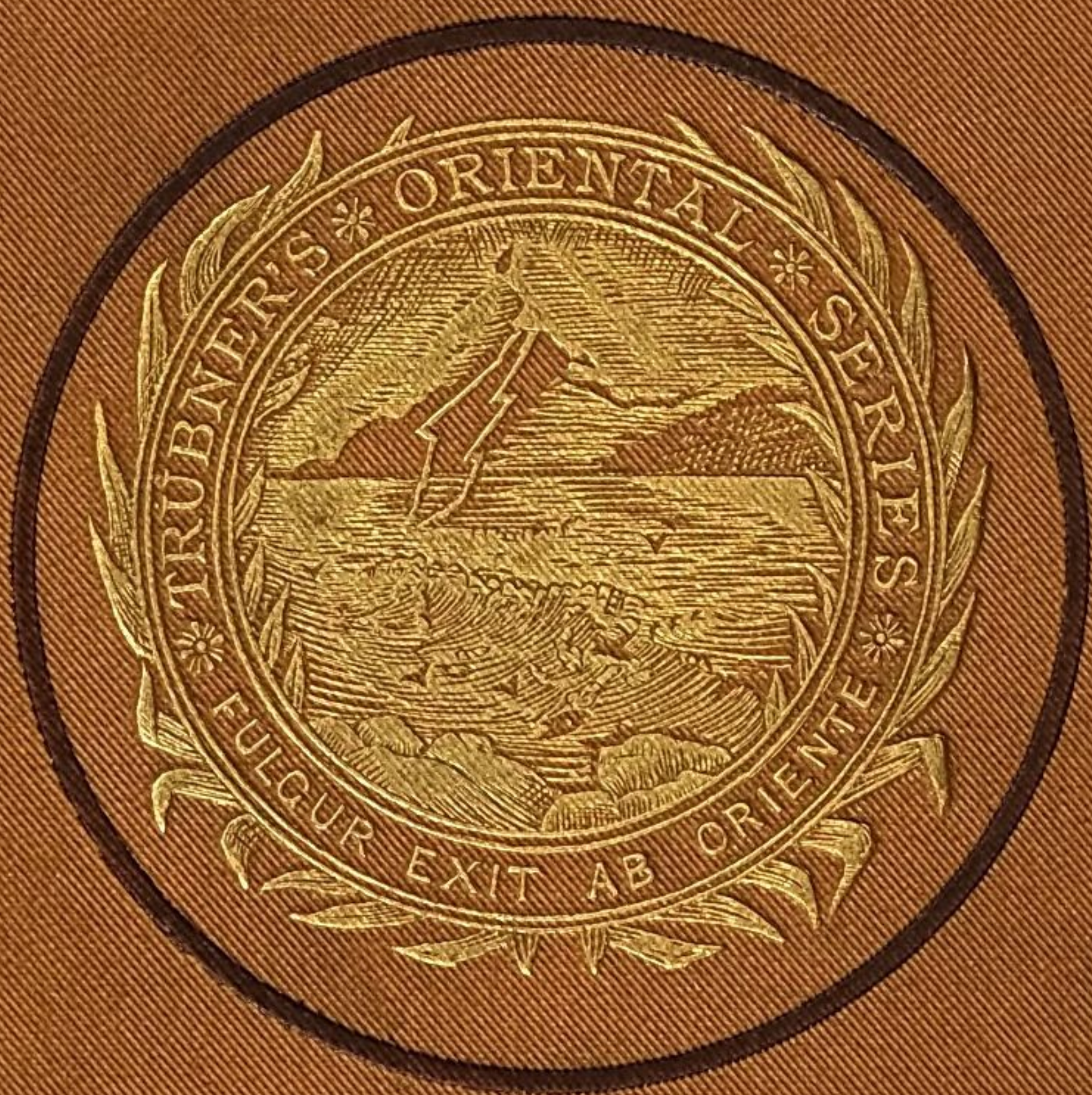




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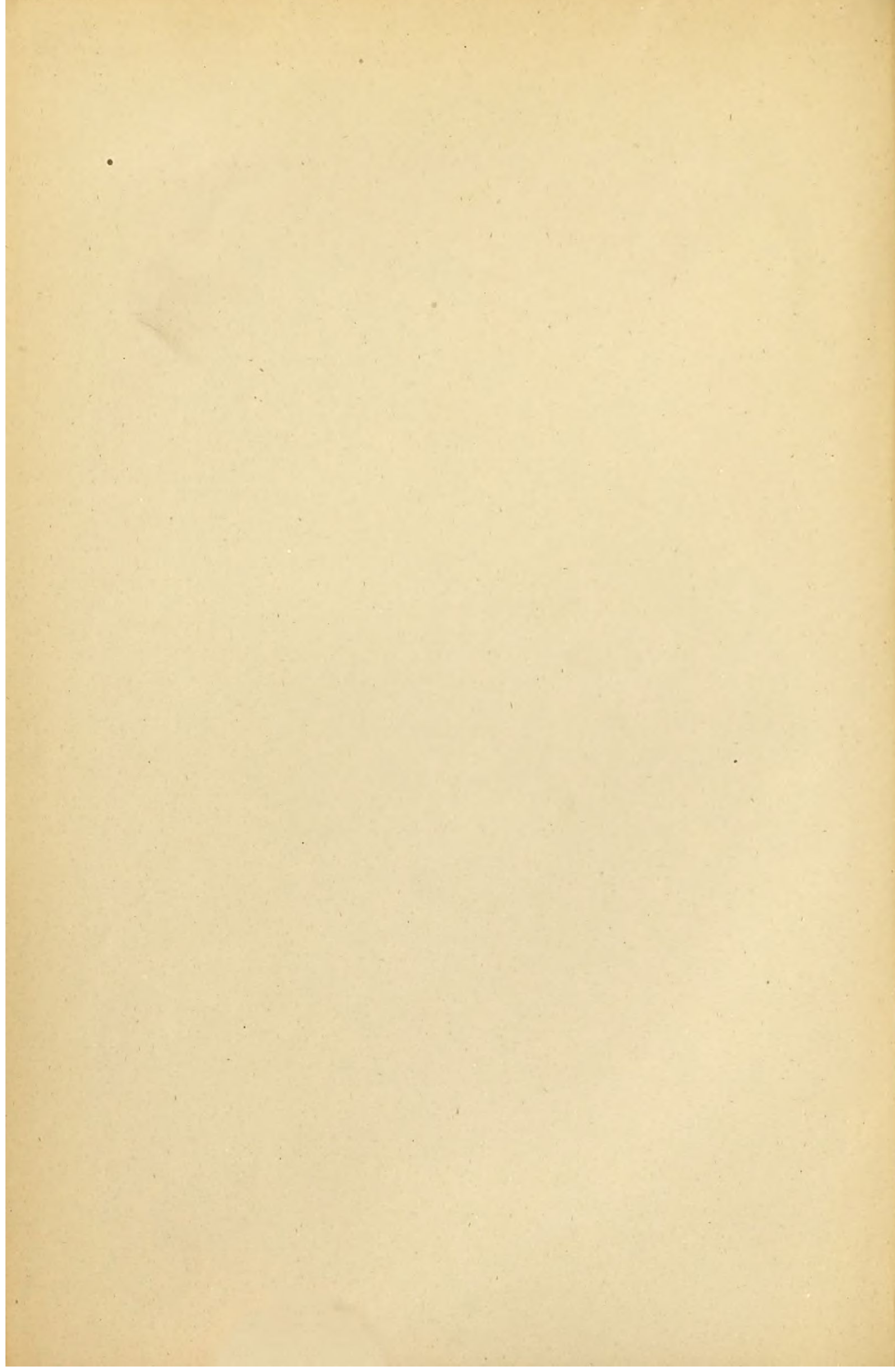
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BY

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PREFACE.

—o—

NÚRU-D-DÍN ABDU-R-RAHMÁN was born in the year 1414 A.D., at Jám, a little town in Khurásán, from which he took the poetic name, Jámí, by which he is generally known. At the age of five he received the name of Núru-d-dín, or, Light of the Faith; and in later life his learning, fame, and sanctity gained for him the title of Mauláná, or, Our Master. He studied at Herát and Samarkand, where he not only outstripped the ablest and most diligent of his fellow-students, but puzzled the most learned of his teachers. The fame of his learning soon spread to the most distant provinces of Persia, and into other Asiatic countries. Sultan Abu Sa'íd, Tímur's uncle, invited him to his court at Herát, and all the princes, nobles, and learned men of the time sought the company of the distinguished poet. In 1472 A.D., Jámí performed the pilgrimage to Mecca, and, after some stay at Baghdad, returned in the following year to Herát, where he died in 1492.

Jámí is the last great poet that Persia has produced. He devoted the whole of his life to study and literary work, and has left behind him at least fifty volumes of poetry, grammar, and theology, which are still read and

admired in the eastern world. "With us," says Mr. Fitzgerald, in his notice of Jámí's Life prefixed to his translation of "Salámán and Absál," "his name is almost wholly associated with his 'Yúsuf and Zulaikha;' the 'Beharistan;' and this present 'Salámán and Absál,' which he tells us is like to be the last product of his old age. And these three count for three of the brother stars of that constellation into which his seven best mystical poems are clustered under the name of 'Heft Aurang'—those 'Seven Thrones' to which we of the West and North give our characteristic names of 'Great Bear' and 'Charles's Wain.'"

But of all the works of Jámí, "Yúsuf and Zulaikha" is undoubtedly the most famous. In India—although for obvious reasons it is not admitted into the course of Government or aided schools—it is read in all independent indigenous schools in which Persian is taught, and is in them what Ovid is or was in all grammar-schools in England. Every Persian scholar in the country has read it, and many know its finest passages by heart. In Europe, too, the merits of the poem have been acknowledged: "Le poème" (says Thornton) "des amours de Joseph et de Zulikha, qui est considéré par les juges compétens de la littérature comme le plus bel ouvrage qui existe en Orient." "Jaumee," says another scholar in his old-fashioned phonetic spelling, "whose poem on the loves of Joseph and Zuleika is one of the finest compositions in the language, and deserves to be translated into every European language—Jaumee has

decorated with all the graces of poetry the romantic story of the youthful Canaanite."

"Yúsuf and Zulaikha" has been translated into German blank verse by Rosenzweig, whose meritorious though decidedly heavy version was published side by side with the Persian text in a handsome well-printed folio at Vienna in 1824. This work has long been out of print, and is now almost unprocurable. I am indebted to Messrs. Trübner & Co. for a copy which, after three years' inquiries, they obtained for me; and I gratefully acknowledge my obligations to the translation, which has been of service to me at times, and to the explanatory notes, from which I have borrowed freely. The poem has not, I believe, been translated into any other European language; only a little volume entitled "Analysis and Specimens of the Joseph and Zulaikha," by S. R., was published by Messrs. Williams & Norgate in 1872. This very unpretending work does not appear to have attracted much notice, and I was unaware of its existence till a month ago. The translator has followed Rosenzweig very carefully in the specimens which he gives in prose, and his analysis of the rest of the poem is accurate and good.

It is well known that Yúsuf, or Joseph, as we call him, is looked upon by the people of Islám as the ideal of manly beauty and more than manly virtue; but it is not so generally known perhaps that the romantic tale of the love, the sufferings, and the crowning happiness of Zulaikha, as told by Jámí, was intended to

shadow forth the human soul's love of the highest beauty and goodness—a love which attains fruition only when the soul has passed through the hardest trials, and has, like Zulaikha, been humbled, purified, and regenerated. So this Allegory resembles in its drift that famous and lovely one in which Celestial Cupid—

“ Holds his dear Psyche sweet entranced,
After her wandering labours long,
Till free consent the Gods among
Make her his eternal bride.”

I have endeavoured in my translation to give what I can of the spirit of the poem, and at the same time to reproduce its form and manner as closely as the differing idioms of the two languages permit me to do. But Jámí's plays upon words—which are looked on as beauties in Persian poetry—I have been obliged to pass by without attempting the almost impossible and useless task of reproducing them. Most of them I omit even to notice, as they are unintelligible without the Persian text and context, and my translation is intended for English readers.

My version covers a little more than three-fourths of the entire poem, which contains about eight thousand lines. In the Appendix I give some notice of the omissions I have made in the introductory cantos and of the concluding cantos which I have not translated. I think it best to end my version with the betrothal of Yúsuf and Zulaikha, where the interest of the story culminates and ends.

Jámi has employed throughout this poem the rhymed hendecasyllabic couplet, and a translation in unrhymed verse would altogether fail to give an idea of his manner. Accordingly for the introductory cantos, which are didactic and somewhat stately in style, I have used the old rhymed heroic metre, and for the rest of the poem a lighter and freer measure, in which I vary at will the number of syllables or accents. I fear that many of my lines will not read off easily at first sight: but I trust that the greater fault of monotony has to some extent been avoided.

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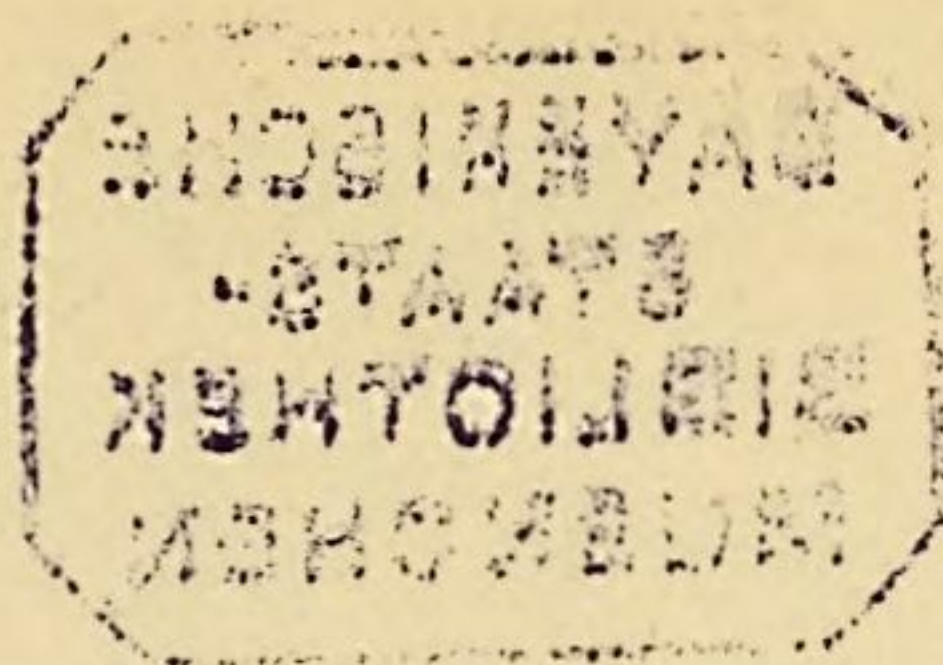
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YÚSUF AND ZULAIKHA.

Prologue.

UNFOLD, O God, the bud of hope : disclose
 From Thine eternal Paradise one rose
 Whose breath may flood my brain with odour, while
 The bud's leaf-liplets make my garden¹ smile.
 O grant that I, in this drear world of woe,
 The boundless riches of Thy grace may know.
 May gratitude to Thee my thoughts employ ;
 To sing Thy praises be my task and joy.

Vouchsafe a prosperous day from those that are
 Best on the roll of Wisdom's calendar.
 Send forth Thy soldier to the war, and teach
 His lips to conquer in the field of speech.
 Grant that my tongue may weigh the pearls, O Lord,
 Which Thy dear bounty in my heart has stored ;
 And let the fragrance Thou hast lent my muse
 Its musky breath from Káf to Káf² diffuse.
 Lips sweet as sugar on my pen bestow,
 And from my book let streams of odour flow.

¹ That is, my heart.

² From east to west, from north to south. Káf is, like the Lokáloka of the Hindus, the ring of mountains which encircles the flat earth.

In this world's inn, where sweetest songs abound,
I hear no prelude to the strain I sound.
The guests have quaffed their wine and passed away ;
Their cups were empty and they would not stay.
No sage, no stripling—not a hand ere mine—
Has held this goblet of poetic wine.
Rise, Jámí, rise : thy fear behind thee cast,
And, be it clear or dull, bring forth the wine thou hast.

Invocation.

ON Him I call who keeps the worlds, the Lord
Whose praises deck the tongue as gems the sword;
Dewed with the fountain of whose grace the tongue
Finds its best rapture when His name is sung.
To mortal sense each moment He declares
Ten thousand subtleties like finest hairs.
He formed the tongue to comb those hairs, and laid
The teeth in even rows that task to aid.
Supreme, omniscient, God for ever reigns;
He lifts the humble and the weak sustains.
He framed the roof of heaven's revolving sphere,
And bade the elements their walls uprear.
He bids the rose that decks the bush unfold,
Balmed with the musk He gives, her leaves of gold.
From Him the flowers, the brides of Spring, receive
The glorious raiment which His fingers weave.
He bids the cypress by the river-side
Lift her fair form erect in stately pride.
He to the great of soul gives high renown,
And casts the arrogant and foolish down.

Still near to those who watch the night away,
He is the Friend who cheers the toiler's day.
His vernal clouds from bounteous seas upborne
Bedew alike the jasmine and the thorn.
Rich from His mines the winds of Autumn blow,
And o'er the mead a gold-wrought carpet throw.
His body is the sun's resplendent sphere,
Lighting each atom, be it far or near.
If from the sun or moon He hid His face,
Each globe would perish, lost in empty space.
To us His grace the boon of being gives :
In His existence every creature lives.
Go, with the foot of lightest fancy tread
Down to earth's centre from the vault o'erhead ;
Above, below, no spot thine eye shall find
Marked with no impress of His sovereign mind.
To Him their forms embodied creatures owe :
Before His glory loftiest heads are low.
To tell His nature weak is wit and lore ;
Hopeless the search that would His ways explore.
Unless He meet and guide us on our way,
Farther, still farther from His grace we stray.
When loud hosannas laud with high acclaim
His might and majesty, a pang of shame
Thrills through the angels in His court who own
They ne'er may know Him as He should be known,

And heaven's revolving sphere itself, dismayed,
Would cease from motion and awhile be stayed.
Let us, mere handfuls of the shifting dust,
Purge our soul's mirror from ambition's rust,
Low on the knee of wondering silence sink,
And on our brief existence cease to think.

The Creator.

How long, my soul, in this false world wilt thou
Pursue the childish play which charms thee now ?
Thou, dainty bird, wast bred with care to rest,
Far from this vain earth, in a sweeter nest.
Why seems that home so strange and far away ?
Why, owl-like, wilt thou in this desert stay ?
Throw off the dust that dims thy feathers, spring
Forth to thy heavenly home on burnished wing.
Behold those spheres for ever circling, bound
With scarves of azure, in their mystic round.
See, their light mantles loosely floating throw
A flood of radiance on the world below.
See them pursuing through the night and day,
True to their purpose, their triumphant way.
Each, like a player's ball obedient, still
Is moved and guided by superior will.
One eastward from the west its journey bends ;
The other's ship to western waves descends.
Each in due progress with alternate sway
Lights the still night or cheers the busy day.

One writes fair lines that promise golden joys :
 One with sad aspect bonds of bliss destroys.
 All, joying in their might, their task renew,
 And with untiring haste their course pursue.
 Onward for ever to the goal they press
 With feet and loins that know not weariness.
 Who learns the secret of their dark intent ?
 Who knows on whom each wanderer's face is bent ?
 Break from these reins, deluding doubt dismiss :
 Ne'er of a planet say, " My Lord is this."
 Seek, like the Friend,¹ truth's kingdom, nor forget
 To cry with him, " I love not gods who set."²
 Cast doubt away, each idle fancy shun,
 And turn thine eyes in constant faith to One.
 One, only One, see, learn, and know, and seek :
 Call on One only, of One only speak.
 Each several atom leads the soul to Him,
 And proves His being though our eyes be dim.
 Deep lies the truth impressed on every heart—
 The picture certifies the painter's art,

¹ Abraham, called by the followers of Islám, the Friend of God, or simply, as here, the Friend.

² " And when the night overshadowed him, Abraham saw a star, and he said, ' This is my Lord ; ' but when it set, he said, ' I love not gods which set.' And when he saw the moon rising, he said ' This is my Lord ; ' but when he saw it set, he said, ' Verily, if my Lord direct me not, I shall become one of them that go astray.' "—*Kurán, Súra vi. 77.*

Without whose forming hand no single line
In fair proportion aids the fair design.
Scan every brick in this world's frame: behold
Each one will show the great Creator's mould.
Each bears the impress of His pen; the writ
Proves that the hand of Wisdom fashioned it.
And canst thou read the message there, nor learn
On Him who fashioned all thy thoughts to turn?
Canst thou behold each glorious scene, nor spare
One thought to Him who made the world so fair?

In life's last hour, which none who breathes can flee,
Thine only Lord, thine only hope, is He.
Then turn to Him e'en now thy longing eyes,
And joy for ever be thy labour's prize.

Praise of God.

IN the beginning, Lord, unformed were we,
 And from the fear of non-existence free ;
 Then, bound in chains of water and of clay,
 Thy fiat called us to the light of day.
 From helpless childhood by Thy grace released,
 Our knowledge grew and ignorance decreased.
 Thy mercy sent the Scripture's blessed light,
 With clear commands to guide our steps aright.
 We, failing yet to know Thy sovereign will,
 Fail or exceed, confounding good and ill.
 From our allegiance, Lord, we err and stray,
 Forget Thy holy laws or disobey.
 Yet spite of sin, spite of rebellious pride,
 Thy light is not withdrawn, Thy grace denied.
 But ah ! what boots it, when our hearts are dead
 To earnest effort, that Thy light is shed ?
 Give us Thy grace—hear our dull hearts complain—
 Thy grace to toil, nor let that toil be vain.
 When sage and idiot perish in the pool,
 How is the sage more happy than the fool ?

Ne'er may the guiles of sensual joy impede
Our forward course in virtuous thought and deed.
Let Thy sweet mercy from this world of woes
Some path of safety to our feet disclose.
Still to the ways of faith conduct Thine own,
And lead us with Thee to Thy glorious throne.

Prayer for Aid.

I AM the bird, my lure Thy heavenly grain ;
Thy story tames me like a magic strain.
Thou hast equipped me for mine earthly race,
And opened for my feet Thy door of grace.
Thou hast not spurned my feeble service ; Thou
My head exaltest when in prayer I bow.
To Thy pure path through Thee my forehead cleaves ;
Mine eye clear vision from Thy touch receives.
By Thee my lips to sing Thy praise are stirred,
And in my heart Thy name is characterized.

Thou at the portal of my throat hast hung
That member soft and delicate, my tongue,
To meet with gentle touch and tempered sound
The rows of even teeth which fence it round.
Sweeten my lips, O Lord, to sing of Thee ;
From taint of gall make Thou mine utterance free.
This tongue, Thy gift, from evil words restrain ;
Ne'er may it lead me to disgrace or pain.

And if my pen, in unconsidered haste,
A word that needs excuse or blame has traced,

Each letter that offends in mercy blot,
And keep mine honour free from stain and spot.

Thy nursling I, a weed beside the way,
Raised by Thy bounty from the mire and clay :
Each breeze that passes bows my humble head,
Yet in Thy path my clinging rootlets spread
To clay more precious than the rose may be
Whose scent and beauty speak not, Lord, of Thee.
Like some sweet bud's, a single heart be mine,
The tulip's single mark within its shrine.
A double heart is fraught with grief and pain,
And single-mindedness alone is gain.
The full ear holds a hundred grains, and all
Beneath the sickle of the reaper fall :
The rosebud wears a single heart, and scorns
The thousand daggers of encircling thorns.

Though vast the burthen of my many crimes,
Thy grace is vaster, Lord, a thousand times.
If ample garner scarce contain my guilt,
My lightning sighs may burn them if Thou wilt.
What though a hundred books my sins record ?
Thou with my tears canst wash them clean, O Lord.

Each cheek I loved, fair as the rose's bud,
Draws from each eyelash now a tear of blood.
Still from their fount the drops of anguish start
And wash each lovely image from my heart.

In vain mine eyes would look for honour fled :
Mine only honour is the tear I shed.
Mine eyes are rivers full of floods of shame :
This till the Day of Doom is all my fame.
Now if my yearning aught of gain may bring,
Lead to the Prophet, Lord, the song I sing.

Praise of the Prophet.

IN separation pine the souls of all :
 For pity, Prophet sent by God, we call.
 Art thou not he who pities all, and how
 Canst thou be distant from the wretched now ?
 O dew-sprent Tulip, thou hast drunk thy fill :
 Awake, Narcissus ! wilt thou slumber still ?
 Show from the screen of bliss thy head ; display
 That brow that bids the dawn of life be gay.
 Turn thou our night of woe to sun-bright morn,
 And let thy face our glorious day adorn.
 Loose from thy head thy long black hair, to meet
 Like shadows falling at thy cypress'¹ feet.
 Soft skins of Táif² for thy sandals take,
 And of our heart-strings fitting lachets make.
 Sages before thee like a carpet lie,
 And fain would kiss thy foot that passes by.
 Leave for the sacred court thy far retreat,
 And tread on lips which yearn to touch those feet.

¹ Cypress, for a tall graceful figure in man or woman, is one of the commonplaces of Persian poetry.

² A town not far from Mecca.

Raise up the fathers ; from their misery free,
And comfort those who give their hearts to thee.
Though o'er our heads the waves of sin roll high ;
Though by thy path with thirsty lips we lie ;
Thou art a cloud of gentle mercy : turn
Thy pitying look on lips that thirst and burn.
O blest are they who turn to thee with eyes
Dimmed with thy pathway's dust and strengthened rise.
We sought the mosque thanksgivings to renew ;
Our souls like moths about thy splendour flew.
Each heart a lattice open to the day,
We sported in thy garden and were gay.
On sacred thresholds of thy courts we wept
Tears from the clouds of eyes that never slept.
We swept the dust that on the pavement lay,
And cleared the thistles with our hands away.
Of that, a salve to purge our sight we made ;
Of these, a plaster on our hearts we laid.
Near to the pulpit in thy mosque we drew,
And laid beneath it cheeks like gold in hue ;
Moved from the arch to offer prayer, and wept
With tears of blood where'er thy foot has stepped.
Erect we stood at every pillar's base,
And 'mid the upright prayed for blissful place.
Our souls yearned for thee : warmed with sweet desire,
We fed each flambeau from our holy fire.

Our souls, thank God, are in that holy spot,
Though with their dust our bodies strew it not.

Helpless are we; our own wild aims we seek :
O aid the helpless and forgive the weak.
Do thou with loving hand our steps sustain,
Or all our labour, all our strength is vain.
Fate drives us wandering from the path astray :
To God our guide, to God for light we pray.
May His great mercy keep our lives secure,
And in the path of faith our steps assure.
When comes that day that wakes the dead at last,
Let not our honour to the flames be cast.
Still may He grant, though we have wandered thus,
Free leave to thee to intercede for us.
'Tis thine with downward head, as suits the mace,¹
To urge the ball through intercession's space.
And through thy aid may Jámí's work be found—
Though some may scorn it—with completion
crowned.

¹ An allusion to the game of *changán*, the modern *polo*.

Beauty.

VOID lay the world, in nothingness concealed,
 Without a trace of light or life revealed,
 Save one existence which no second knew—
 Unknown the pleasant words of We and You.
 Then Beauty shone, from stranger glances free,
 Seen of herself, with naught beside to see,
 With garments pure of stain, the fairest flower
 Of virgin loveliness in bridal bower.
 No combing hand had smoothed a flowing tress,
 No mirror shown her eyes their loveliness.
 No surma¹ dust those cloudless orbs had known,
 To the bright rose her cheek no bulbul flown.
 No heightening hand had decked the rose with green,
 No patch² or spot upon that cheek was seen.
 No zephyr from her brow had filched a hair,
 No eye in thought had seen the splendour there.
 Her witching snares in solitude she laid,
 And love's sweet game without a partner played.

¹ Collyrium or antimony, applied under the eyelid.

² Small black "beauty spots" were used by Persian, as formerly by English ladies.

But when bright Beauty reigns and knows her power,
She springs indignant from her curtained bower.
She scorns seclusion and eludes the guard,
And from the window looks if doors be barred.
See how the tulip on the mountain grown,
Soon as the breath of genial Spring has blown,
Bursts from the rock, impatient to display
Her nascent beauty to the eye of day.

When sudden to thy soul reflection brings
The precious meaning of mysterious things,
Thou canst not drive the thought from out thy brain ;
Speak, hear thou must, for silence is such pain.
So beauty ne'er will quit the urgent claim
Whose motive first from heavenly beauty came,
When from her blessed bower she fondly strayed,
And to the world and man her charms displayed.

In every mirror then her face was shown,
Her praise in every place was heard and known.
Touched by her light, the hearts of angels burned,
And, like the circling spheres, their heads were turned,
While saintly bands, whom purest motives stir,
Joined in loud praises at the sight of her,
And those who bathe them in the ocean sky
Cried out enraptured, "Laud to God on high!"

Rays of her splendour lit the rose's breast
And stirred the bulbul's heart with sweet unrest.

From her bright glow its cheek the flambeau fired,
And myriad moths around the flame expired.
Her glory lent the very sun the ray
Which wakes the lotus on the flood to-day.
Her loveliness made Laila's¹ face look fair
To Majnún, fettered by her every hair.
She opened Shírín's sugared lips, and stole
From Parvíz' breast and brave Farhád's the soul.
Through her his head the Moon of Canaan² raised,
And fond Zulaikha perished as she gazed.

Yes, though she shrinks from earthly lovers' call,
Eternal Beauty is the queen of all ;
In every curtained bower the screen she holds,
About each captured heart her bonds enfolds.
Through her sweet love the heart its life retains,
The soul through love of her its object gains.
The heart which maidens' gentle witcheries stir
Is, though unconscious, fired with love of her.
Refrain from idle speech ; mistake no more :
She brings her chains and we, her slaves, adore.
Fair and approved of Love, thou still must own
That gift of beauty comes from her alone.
Thou art concealed : she meets all lifted eyes ;
Thou art the mirror which she beautifies.

¹ Laila and Majnún, and Shírín, Parvíz, and Farhád, are typical lovers, celebrated and frequently alluded to in Persian poetry.

² Yúsuf.

She is that mirror, if we closely view
The truth—the treasure and the treasury too.

But thou and I—our serious work is naught;
We waste our days unmoved by earnest thought.
Cease, or my task will never end, for her
Sweet beauties lack a meet interpreter.
Then let us still the slaves of love remain,
For without love we live in vain, in vain.

Love.

No heart is that which love ne'er wounded : they
Who know not lovers' pangs are soulless clay.
Turn from the world, O turn thy wandering feet ;
Come to the world of love and find it sweet.

Heaven's giddy round from craze of love was caught ;
From love's disputes the world with strife is fraught.
Love's slave be thou if thou would fain be free :
Welcome love's pangs, and happy shalt thou be.
From wine of love come joy and generous heat :
From meaner cups flow sorrow and deceit.
Love's sweet, soft memories youth itself restore :
The tale of love gives fame for evermore.
If Majnún ne'er the cup of love had drained,
High fame in heaven and earth he ne'er had gained.
A thousand sages, deep in wisdom's lore,
Untaught of love, died, and are known no more :
Without a name or trace in death they sank,
And in the book of Time their name is blank.

The groves are gay with many a lovely bird :
Our lips are silent and their praise unheard ;

But when the theme is love's delicious tale,
The moth is lauded and the nightingale.
What though a hundred arts to thee be known :
Freedom from self is gained through love alone.
To worldly love thy youthful thoughts incline,
For earthly love will lead to love divine.
First with the Alphabet thy task begin,
Then take the Word of God and read therein.

Once to his master a disciple cried :—
"To wisdom's pleasant path be thou my guide."
"Hast thou ne'er loved?" the master answered ; "learn
The ways of love and then to me return."
Drink deep of earthly love, that so thy lip
May learn the wine of holier love to sip.
But let not form too long thy soul entrance ;
Pass o'er the bridge : with rapid feet advance.
If thou would rest, thine ordered journey sped,
Forbear to linger at the bridge's head.

Thank God that ever from mine early days
My steps have been in love's delightful ways.
Love stood beside me when my life was new,
And from my mother's breast love's milk I drew.
White as that milk are now my hairs, but still
Sweet thoughts of love mine aged bosom thrill.
Still in my heart the youthful warmth I feel,
While in mine ear re-echoes Love's appeal :—

“ In love, O Jámí, have thy days been passed :
Die in that love gay-hearted to the last.
Some tale of love’s adventure, that may win
Thy name remembrance in the world, begin :
Some picture with thy finest pen assay,
Which still may live when thou art gone away.”

I heard entranced : my spirit rushed to meet
Love’s welcome order, for the voice was sweet ;
With gladsome heart the clear command obeyed,
And straight the magic of new spells essayed.
Now if kind Heaven will bless and aid the task,
And lade my palm-tree with the fruit I ask,
I from this glowing heart will pour a song
To melt the tender and to move the strong ;
Veil the blue vault of heaven with cloud of sighs,
And with wild weeping dim its starry eyes.

Speech.

SPEECH, prime of new-born blossoms that belong
To Love, is prelude to Love's book of song :
The loftiest height the sage's foot may climb,
The surest monument to vanquish time.
The might of speech alone unfolds to view
Whate'er the world brings forth of old or new.
Speech gave the mandate : eager to obey,
The writer's pen on Being's tablet lay.
The pen's existence from that hest began,
And from its opening eye a fountain ran.
Those waters dancing as they murmur by
Inebriate the world, the low and high :
They move the tongue ; each word becomes a rose
From mystic gardens as the lips uncloze,
And comes, the breath of life about it shed,
With graceful motion from its flowery bed.
It gains the portal of the listening ear,
And Wisdom trembles when the power is near.

The will speeds forth to greet the welcome guest,
And shrines the virgin bud within the breast.
Now to the lip the smile of joy it brings ;
Now wins the tear-drop from her secret springs ;
Now with gay smile it wreathes the lip of woe ;
Now from each laughing eye bids tears o'erflow.
When linked with speech this heavenly power I see,
Her faithful servant let me ever be.
Old age has caught me drinking still this wine :
Now to cast off the load of eld be mine.
The secret of my heart I will not keep,
But make the world that listens smile and weep.
Shírín and Khusrau's¹ might are themes outworn ;
A sweeter Khusrau shall my song adorn.
Laila and Majnún's love have had their day ;
Another's name shall animate my lay,
Who spread, a parrot sugar-fed, the fame
Of Yúsuf's beauty and Zulaikha's flame.
The Word of God has called this tale the best ;²
And in my sweetest verse shall it be dressed.
No lie may here find entrance : search it through ;
The tale is stamped by revelation true.
A falsehood never, dressed by flattering Art
To show like truth, may satisfy the heart.

¹ Khusrau Parvíz (Chosroes), the lover of Shírín.

² "We will relate to you the most excellent of stories."—*Kurán*,
Súra xii.

Speech by fair truth is decked and honoured best,
As the full moon is ever loveliest.
Dark is the dim false dawn,¹ because, forsworn,
It proudly boasts to usher in the morn ;
But the true morning comes, and straight unfurled,
His golden banner glitters o'er the world.

No darling ever was like Yúsuf fair,
In peerless beauty far beyond compare.
Still is each youth, above his fellows famed
For charm of face, a second Yúsuf named.
None like Zulaikha loved. O far above
All women's her immeasurable love !
To age from childhood, love's unconquered flame
In wealth and poverty burnt on the same.
When after age, infirmity, and pain,
Her youth, and strength, and gladness came again,
She never turned from love's true path aside,
But, born to love, in love she lived and died.
Now from my pen I strew the pearls of verse
And the sweet story of her love rehearse.
A store of wisdom ever new repays
Each golden piece expended in their praise.
If some good man—this grace I pray to win—
Opens this book of love and reads therein,

¹ A transient light on the horizon preceding the true dawn in the East.

May he not turn, as turns the leaf, his back,
Nor with his finger's reed my lines attack.
If here and there a slip or fault he see,
May he not lay the blame of all on me.
May he correct my errors, or befriend
With generous silence faults he cannot mend.

The Vision of Adam.

THEY who can read the Book which God revealed,
 And weigh the pearls which mystic oceans yield,
 Tell thus of Adam, when their pens begin
 The story of this world and all therein.
 His world-embracing eye unclosed to see
 In glorious line his children yet to be.
 There in due order of precedence stood
 Before his face the prophets' brotherhood.
 Then from the rest apart, a noble band,
 He saw the saints of God in order stand ;
 Then crowned, in pomp and pride of royal state,
 Passed many a king and famous potentate ;
 And myriad others came, apart from those,
 In due succession of their marshalled rows.

The long procession passed, and Adam viewed
 Each for a moment in the multitude.
 He looked on Yúsuf and beheld a moon,
 A sun most glorious in his height of noon ;
 A chosen lamp conspicuous o'er the rest,
 Of all the goodly throng the goodliest.

Before the golden sun the stars are dim,
And beauty faded at the sight of him.
Loose flowed his graceful mantle; prone before
His feet adorers kissed the robe he wore.
Thought cannot picture, lips can ne'er express,
Though skilled in speech, his perfect loveliness.
Robed in the garb of heavenly favour, on
His brow a crown of kingly glory shone.
Spring of the dawn of joy, his brow was gay;
Night at his coming shone like glorious day.
Before, behind, from darkening bodies free,
The holy prophets' glorious company,
And spirits sanctified, a countless band,
Waving a banner in each radiant hand
Before that temple and the light he shed
In whispering adoration bowed the head.

And Adam marvelled at the glorious show,
And from his lips came question soft and low :—
“Lord, in whose garden grows this gracious plant?
Whose happy eyes will its sweet flower enchant?
Why falls on him this light of glory? Whence
This splendour, beauty, and magnificence?”
“Thine eyes' dear light is he,” a voice replied,
“Thy wounded bosom's sweetest joy and pride.
A tender plant from Jacob's flowery dell,
From Abraham's spacious plain a fair gazelle.

High over Saturn shall his palace tower,
And Egypt's fruitful land enthrone his power.
The perfect beauty in his face expressed
Shall wake the envy of earth's loveliest.
He holds a mirror in his hand to show
His face ; on him thy treasured gift bestow."

And Adam said :—" Unclosed is favour's door :
Six shares has beauty, and I give him four.
May every charm by loveliest youth possessed
In him be double, single in the rest ;
And, when his splendour comes to vanquish all,
Their gift of beauty to a third shall fall."

Then to his guileless heart the youth he drew,
And gave him strength to keep him pure and true ;
Told him the love that thrilled his happy breast,
And on his brow a father's kiss impressed ;
Bloomed like the rose in proud paternal joy,
And blessed in bulbul¹ tone that rose-like boy.

¹ The bulbul, or nightingale, is the lover of the rose.

Yūsuf.

IN this orchestra full of vain deceit
 The drum of Being, each in turn, we beat.
 Each morning brings new truth to light and fame,
 And on the world falls lustre from a name.
 If in one constant course the ages rolled,
 Full many a secret would remain untold.
 If the sun's splendour never died away,
 Ne'er would the market of the stars be gay.
 If in our gardens endless frost were king,
 No rose would blossom at the kiss of Spring.

When Adam's service in the temple ceased,
 Seth took his station as presiding priest.
 He passed away, and Idrís¹ next began
 In this sad world to preach pure lore to man.
 When he was called away to read in heaven,
 To Noah's watchful care our faith was given.
 When Noah sank beneath death's whelming wave,
 To Allah's friend² the door admittance gave.

¹ Enoch. Idrís is derived from *darasa*, "he read," and the following line contains a play on the word.

² Abraham,

When heavenly mansions claimed him for a guest,
Isaac the treasure which he left possessed.
When Isaac wearied of the world and died,
The voice of Jacob was religion's guide.
He lived and prospered: planted by his hand,
His banner waved o'er Shaín¹ and Canaan's land,
Wherein he made his dwelling. Rich was he
In patriarchal wealth and progeny;
And sheep and rams cropped on his hills their food
Like ants and locusts for their multitude.
Twelve sons were his. Among them Yúsuf won
The father's heart, his best beloved son,
The darling of his age. The happy mother
Bore him the heavenly moon's terrestrial brother.
In the heart's garden a fair plant was reared;
A bright young moon in the soul's heaven appeared;
In Abraham's rosebed a sweet blossom, bright
In garb of tender beauty, sprang to light;
In the House of Isaac there rose a star
Whose splendour streamed through the sky afar;
In the garden of Jacob a tulip grew,
The balm of his heart and its sorrow too:
A fawn of the sweetest odour, that made
Cathay² envy the fields where his young feet strayed.

¹ Syria.

² Khutan or Chinese Tartary, famous for its musk-deer.

The mother, while earth was her place of rest,
Dewed the babe's sweet lips from her loving breast.
When two glad years she had nursed her son,
Time poisoned her food and her course was run.
That pearl from the ocean of grace was left
An orphan in tears, of her love bereft.
The father pitied the babe. The fair
Young pearl he gave to his sister's care ;
And her heart's dear nursling, a bird endued
With gay wings, roamed in the garden of food.¹
Then stood the child on his baby feet,
And the lisping words of his lips were sweet.
Not for an instant the dame would part
From the infant whose love had enchained her heart.
On her bosom at night, like her soul, he lay,
And was ever the sun of her eyes by day.

But the love of the father grew strong, and he
Would fain the face of his darling see ;
He longed that the babe, who alone could kill
The grief of his heart, should be near him still ;
Day and night he would have him near,
A moon the gloom of his soul to cheer.
Thus to his sister he said :—" O thou
Whom love for me bends like the willow bough,

¹ Was weaned and began to eat.

My Yúsuf, my child, to my side restore ;
His absence is grief I can bear no more.
Let him come to the place where I pray alone,
To the dreary cell where I make my moan."

The sister heard the words that he said ;
In sign of obedience she bowed her head,
But plotted deep in her heart the while
To bring the child back to her home by guile.
She had a belt which Isaac had given,
Worn by him long in the service of Heaven :
Free from all evil was he whose hand
Bound on his body that blessed band.
When she sent the boy to his father, she braced
The girdle secretly round his waist,
Fastened so deftly that Yúsuf felt
No strain or touch of the supple belt.
So the boy went forth. But a sudden shout
And a bitter cry from the dame rang out :
"Lost is the girdle I wore." She left
None unaccused of the graceless theft.
Those of her household came at her call,
And, ranged before her, she searched them all.
At last came the turn of Yúsuf, and round
His waist the girdle she sought was found.

There was a law for repressing crime,
Fixed for the faithful in ancient time,

Which to the injured owner gave
The captured thief for his thrall and slave.
Thus, by the fraud she had plotted caught,
The boy again to her home was brought.
Glad was her eye and her soul elate,
But that eye soon closed at the stroke of Fate.

The heart of Jacob at last reposed,
As he gazed with his fond eyes that never closed ;
From the sons that were round him he looked away,
And turned to him as we turn to pray.
For Yúsuf now was his only thought
In each work that he planned, in each aim that he sought.
In Yúsuf only his soul had delight,
For only Yúsuf his eye grew bright.

How may I tell the boy's beauty ? Where
Could Houri or Peri be found so fair ?
When the moonlight shines on the landscape, none
Would turn to look on a garish sun.
He was a moon in the sphere of grace
That threw a soft light over life and space :
And yet no moon, but a sun that lent
His light to the moon of the firmament.
But shall I his light to the sun's compare—
To the false mirage of the desert air ?
'Twas a wondrous ineffable lustre, far
Beyond the brightness of things that are ;

For the One Unspeakable God in that frame
Lay concealed under Yúsuf's name.
How shall we marvel if, fostered long
In the father's bosom, his love grew strong?
Zulaikha, envied of Houris, at rest
In her virgin bower afar in the West,
Ne'er had seen the sun of his beauty gleam,
But was snared by his loveliness seen in a dream.
If Love's dominion no distance can bar,
When heart is near heart he can never be far.

Zulaikha.

THUS the masters of speech record,
In whose bosoms the treasures of words are
stored :

There was a king in the West.¹ His name,
Taimús, was spread wide by the drum of fame.
Of royal power and wealth possessed,
No wish unanswered remained in his breast.
His brow gave lustre to glory's crown,
And his foot gave the thrones of the mighty
renown.

With Orion from heaven his host to aid,
Conquest was his when he bared his blade.
His child Zulaikha was passing fair,
None in his heart might with her compare ;
Of his royal house the most brilliant star,
A gem from the chest where the treasures are.
Praise cannot equal her beauty, no ;
But its faint, faint shadow my pen may show.

¹ In Mauritania.

Like her own bright hair falling loosely down,
 I will touch each charm to her feet from her crown.
 May the soft reflexion of that bright cheek,
 Lend light to my spirit and bid me speak,
 And that flashing ruby, her mouth, bestow
 The power to tell of the things I know.

Her stature was like to a palm-tree grown
 In the garden of grace where no sin is known.
 Bedewed by the love of her father the king,
 She mocked the cypress that rose by the spring.
 Sweet with the odour of musk, a snare
 For the heart of the wise was the maiden's hair.
 Tangled at night, in the morning through
 Her long thick tresses a comb she drew,
 And cleft the heart of the musk-deer in twain
 As for that rare odour he sighed in vain.
 A dark shade fell from her loose hair sweet
 As jasmine over the rose of her feet.
 A broad silver tablet her forehead displayed
 For the heaven-set lessons of beauty made.
 Under its edge two inverted Núns¹
 Showed, black as musk, their splendid half-moons,
 And beneath them lively and bright were placed
 Two Sáds² by the pen of her Maker traced.

¹ The letter *Nún* ن of the Arabic alphabet.

² The letter *Sád* ص is supposed, in its right-hand portion, to resemble the eye.

From Nún to the ring of the Mím¹ there rose,
Pure as silver, like Alif,² her nose.
To that cipher her mouth add Alif, then
She had ten strong spells for the conquest of men.²
That laughing ruby to view exposed
A Sín³ when the knot of her lips unclosed
At the touch of her pure white teeth, and between
The lines of crimson their flash was seen.
Her face was the garden of Iram,⁴ where
Roses of every hue are fair.
The dusky moles that enhanced the red
Were like Moorish boys playing in each rosebed.
Of silver that paid no tithe, her chin
Had a well with the Water of Life therein.
If a sage in his thirst came near to drink,
He would feel the spray ere he reached the brink,
But lost were his soul if he nearer drew,
For it was a well and a whirlpool too.
Her neck was of ivory. Thither drawn,
Came with her tribute to beauty the fawn ;
And the rose hung her head at the gleam of the skin
Of shoulders fairer than jessamine.

¹ The small circular part of the letter *Mím* is compared to a mouth.

² *Alif* is a long straight letter ; it stands for the number one, and, prefixed to a cipher, notes 10.

³ The letter *Sín* bears a rough resemblance to teeth.

⁴ A fabulous garden in Arabia, like the Garden of the Hesperides of the Greeks.

Her breasts were orbs of a light most pure,
Twin bubbles new-risen from fount Káfúr :¹
Two young pomegranates grown on one spray,
Where bold hope never a finger might lay.
The touchstone itself was proved false when it tried
Her arms' fine silver thrice purified ;
But the pearl-pure amulets fastened there
Were the hearts of the holy absorbed in prayer.
The loveliest gave her their souls for rue,²
And round the charm their own heartstrings drew.
Her arms filled her sleeves with silver from them
Whose brows are bound with the diadem.
To labour and care her soft hand lent aid,
And to wounded hearts healing unction laid.
Like reeds were those taper fingers of hers,
To write on each heart love's characters.
Each nail on those fingers so long and slim
Showed a new moon laid on a full moon's brim,
And her small closed hand made the moon confess
That she never might rival its loveliness.
Two columns fashioned of silver upheld
That beauty which never was paralleled,
And, to make the tale of her charms complete,
They were matched by the shape of her exquisite feet.

¹ Camphor : the name of a well in Paradise.

² The small black seeds of the wild rue were used in enchantments.

Feet so light and elastic no maid might show,
So perfectly fashioned from heel to toe.
If on the eye of a lover she stepped,
Her foot would float on the tear he wept.

What shall I say of her gems and gold ?
Weak were my tale when my best were told.
She was not fairer for gold or gem,
But her perfect loveliness glorified them.
Each gem the tax of a realm, she set
On her forehead a glistering coronet ;
And the rubies that hung from her fine ears stole
Each gazer's senses, and heart and soul.
A thousand jewels most rich and rare
Studded the band that confined her hair.
Not a hand but hers had the art to twist
The bracelet which circled her delicate wrist.
What need I say of her jewels more ?
Glistering anklets of gold she wore.
She moved through her chambers in raiment wrought
With gold, from Egypt and Syria bought,
Or with languishing looks on her couch she leant
In brocades which China and Rûm¹ had sent.
She decked her beauty with some new dress
Each morn that she lit with her loveliness.
As the moon each night by fresh stars is met,

¹ Greece.

So she wore not twice the same coronet.
The hem of her mantle alone might gain
A kiss of that foot while kings sought it in vain ;
And no hand but the fold of her robe embraced
The delicate stem of her dainty waist.

Maidens like cypresses straight and tall,
With Peri faces, obeyed her call ;
And by day and by night in her service stood
The Houris' loveliest sisterhood.
No burthen as yet had her sweet soul borne ;
Never her foot had been pierced by a thorn.
No breath of passion her heart might stir,
And to love and be loved was unknown to her.
Like the languid narcissus she slept at night,
And hailed like an opening bud the light.
With silver-faced maidens in childhood's hour,
And gazelle-like playmates in garden and bower,
Heedless of Fate and its cruel play,
Sport was her business and life was gay.
By no fear of peril or woe oppressed,
Blithe was each thought of her virgin breast,
For she knew not the fate that the days would bring,
Or what terrible birth from the nights would spring.

The First Vision.

SWEET as the morning of life, the night
Was filled like the springtide of youth with de-
light.

Each bird was asleep, and each fish in the rill,
And even the stream of event was still.
In this garden, the joy of uncounted eyes,
All were at rest save the stars in the skies.
Night had hushed the tongue of the tinkling bell,
And stolen the sense of the sentinel.
His twisted tail, as he curled him round,
Was a collar to choke the voice of the hound.
The bird of night had no power to sing,
For his reed was cut with the sword of his wing.
The drowsy watchman scarce raised his eye,
And the palace dome, where it rose on high,
Wore, as his senses had well-nigh fled,
The form of a monstrous poppy-head.
The drummer ceased, and his hand, o'ercome
By the might of slumber, lay still on the drum,

Ere the loud-voiced Muezzin calling to prayer
Had rolled up the beds of the sleepers there.
Her narcissus eyes¹ in deep slumber closed,
Sweetly the sweet-lipped Zulaikha reposed.
Tresses of spikenard her pillow pressed,
And the rose of her limbs strewed the couch of her
rest,

While the hair dishevelled on that fair head
Wrote on the rose with each silken thread.
The outward eye of the maiden slept,
But the eye of her spirit its vigil kept;
And she saw before her a fair youth stand—
Nay, 'twas a being from spirit-land:
From the world of glory, more lovely far
Than the large-eyed damsels of Paradise are;
For his face made their beauty and glances dim,
And their glances and beauty were stolen from
him.

His form like a sapling was straight and tall,
And the cypress-tree was, to him, a thrall.²
His hair, a beautiful chain to bind
The heart of the wisest, flowed unconfined.
The sun and the moon confessed with shame
That a purer light from his forehead came.

¹ Eyes heavy with sleep are frequently compared to the narcissus.

² The usual epithet of the cypress is "free."

The arch¹ of the mosque where the holy bow,
Or the canopy made for their rest, was his brow.
His eyes, where the tint of the surma was new,
With a dart from each lash pierced the bosom
through,

And the pearls, when the rubies apart were drawn,
Were as lightning's flash through the red of dawn.

Zulaikha saw, and a moment—one—
Was too much, for the maid was for ever undone.
One glance at that loveliest form, which passed
Men, and Peris, and Houris, she cast,
And to that sweet face and those charms a slave
Her heart—nay, a hundred hearts—she gave.
From the visional form she would never forget
The plant of love in her breast was set.
Lit by the light of his beauty, the flame
Zulaikha's patience and faith o'ercame.
She tied her heartstrings to each hair of that head
Whence the precious odour of amber was shed.
The tears welled forth from her eyes in a flood,
And those orbs, as she slumbered, were flecked with
blood.

The mole on that fair face was still in her view,
And she burned in the fire of his love like rue.²

¹ The arch towards which worshippers turn in prayer.

² The seeds of the wild rue burnt as a charm.

That rounded throat was her constant pain,
And that chin a sweet apple she longed to gain.
O marvellous beauty! The shape had fled,
But the love grew stronger which fancy fed.
Weary of self had the maiden grown,
And could find her rest in that form alone.

Love's Longing.

NIGHT, the black raven, had flown away,
 And the cock crew loud at the dawn of day.
 The voice of the bulbul to song addressed,
 Drew the veil of her leaves from the rose's breast.
 With the tears of morning the jasmine was wet,
 And dew gemmed the bud of the violet.

Zulaikha still lay motionless there,
 Her heart turned to that night as we turn for prayer.
 But no sweet slumber now held her fast,
 But the senseless swoon of the night that had passed.
 Her maidens kissed her soft hand, and round
 Her couch their foreheads were pressed to the ground.
 Then the veil from the dew-sprent tulip¹ she raised,
 And with weary eyes round the chamber gazed.
 Like a fair young sun or a moon her face
 Shone forth from her collar, its rising-place.
 No sign of that youth could her eye behold,
 And she shrank as a soft flower shrinks in the cold.
 She thought of that cypress in longing grief
 And would rend her robe as the rose her leaf.

¹ The dew-sprent tulip is her eye.

But the maiden's hand was by shame restrained,
And her foot 'neath the mantle of patience retained,
And her secret love she still kept unknown
Like the ruby that sleeps in the heart of the stone.
Her bosom bled, but no drop might show
The cause of the wound and her bitter woe.
With her waiting-maids she would talk and smile,
But her soul was heavy with grief the while.
Her lips of sugar would laugh, but pain
Knotted her heart like the sugar-cane.
Gay was her tongue with the tale and jest,
But the tongues of love's flame flickered fierce in her
breast.

On the forms of her maidens her eye she cast,
But her heart was bound to the loved one fast.
Her soul's rein had slipped from the hand of her
will,

For where'er she might be she was with him still.
'Tis vain for the poor heart to struggle while
Love holds it with teeth of the crocodile.
No wish had she now, not a thought save for one;
Save in him no rest and no comfort, none.
If she spoke, his image prompted the word;
If she wished, he only her bosom stirred.
Often her soul had near passed away
Ere the sweet night ended her weary day—

Night, the dear friend of all lovers ; night,
Who hides their secrets that fear the light—
Night, the meet theme of the lover's praise,
Who drops the kind veil which the morn would raise.
Then she turned her face to the wall of lament,
And her back was curved as a harp is bent.
The strings of that harp were the streams from her
 eyes,
And its voice was the tune of her ceaseless sighs.
From the depths of her soul the wild music rose,
And its treble and bass were the tale of her woes.
The loved one's image in sight she kept,
And uttered these pearls with the pearls she wept :
" Purest of gems, from what mine art thou
For whom I am weeping these tear-gems now ?
Thou art gone from my sight with the heart thou hast
 snared,
But thy name and thy home thou hast not declared.
Of whom shall I ask ? To whom shall I turn,
Thy name and the place where thou dwellest to learn ?
Art thou a king, by what name art thou known ?
A moon ?—with what stars is thy heavenly throne ?
Ah, ne'er may a maiden be captured like me !
I am robbed of my heart and the robber goes free.
I saw thine image ; it stole my sleep ;
And now blood from mine eyes and my heart I weep.

Sleepless for ever my body must be,
For my heart is on fire with the love of thee.
I was a rose in youth's garden ; there
Like the Water of Life I was fresh and fair.
No breeze might roughly visit my head,
And my delicate foot on no thorn might tread.
With one glance thou hast thrown to the winds my
rest,
And a thousand thorns my pillow infest.
On a thorny bed there is little repose
For a frame that is soft as the leaf of a rose."
Thus in wailing and wild lament
For the vanished image her night was spent.
When the flush of morning was near, to hide
All traces of sorrow her eyes she dried.
Her cypress form on her bed she threw,
And the pillow was bright with the rose's hue.
But the wounds of her teeth were visible yet
On the lips where her sorrow-parched tongue was set.
Thus unchanging, by night and by day,
The hours of Zulaikha passed sadly away.

Suspicious.

THE arrows of Love are pointed so well
 That no wisdom's shield may their stroke repel.
 To the ground of the heart they will cleave their way,
 And a hundred traces their wounds betray.
 The odour of incense breathes far and wide,
 And love, like musk, it were vain to hide.
 Through a hundred folds of the veil will steal
 The perfume your labour would fain conceal.

The love of Zulaikha was unconfessed,
 And the seed of sorrow lay dark in her breast.
 But the love waxed strong, and the sorrow grew,
 And more, ever more, they were forced to view.
 The water flowed from her eyes in a flood—
 Water? Ah, no; 'twas a stream of blood;
 And, as each big drop from their lashes fell,
 There was a traitor her secret to tell.
 From her burning bosom she heaved the sigh,
 And the steam¹ of her sorrow went up to the sky,

¹ A sigh is called in Persian the "smoke of the heart."

While each long sigh from her bosom came
To show the fierce heat of her secret flame.
At night she was sleepless; her food she spurned,
And to yellow tulips her roses were turned.
You may search the garden, but look in vain
For a tulip¹ free from all spot and stain.

'Twas known to her maidens by signs like these
That the mind of Zulaikha was ill at ease.
But her hidden sorrow they knew not, nor guessed
What troubled the calm of their lady's breast.
"Who ever," cried one, "has seen aught so strange?
Some evil glance may have wrought the change."
Another maiden the grief would trace
To a Dev,² or one of the Peris' race.
Cried a third: "A magician, I know full well,
Has laid on our lady his secret spell."
"Nay," said another, "'tis Love that weighs
On the captive bosom whereon he preys.
When she wakes no lover can meet her sight,
And the anguish comes from the dreams of night."
Thus each maiden her thought expressed,
Pondered each sign, and inferred and guessed.
But still the secret of love, concealed
Mid doubt and conjecture, was unrevealed.

¹ The flecked tulip is the emblem of a love-wounded heart.

² An evil spirit.

She had a nurse who possessed a store
Gleaned from the treasures of magic lore.
Deep was her knowledge of lovers' ways;
She had loved and been loved in her youthful days.
Skilled in the arts which let lovers meet,
She could lead the cold youth to the maiden's feet.
Before her lady one night she fell,
Recalled how long she had served her well,
And "Sweet bud of the royal garden," she cried,
"A thorn from whose stem were a beauty's pride,
May thy lips ever smile, and thy heart be gay,
And thy splendour lend to my fortune a ray.
My soul like a pheasant would flutter round thee,
Of the garden of beauty thou fair cypress-tree.
My sea of affection the stream has supplied,
Which has fed thy growth on its fertile side.
These eyes of mine saw thy dear cheek first,
And the new-born child in these arms was nursed.
With musk and rose-water thy limbs and head
I bathed, and sweet drops on thy lips I shed.
With the strings of mine own loving soul I tied
The cradle bands which my heart supplied.
Thy sugar lips to this breast I drew,
And by me thy body and spirit grew.
Night came, but my care for thee robbed me of rest;
Morn dawned, and my nursling I bathed and dressed.

The babe that by night on my bosom lay,
Was the stamp on my back when I moved by day.
The fair rose-bush to a cypress grew,
But my hand from thy mantle I never withdrew.
In each loving service for thee I wrought,
And cared for thy needs with mine earnest thought.
Where'er that heart-ravishing cypress moved,
The love of thy faithful shadow was proved.
When my dear lady rested I stood by her bed,
And laid at her feet, when she slumbered, my head.
Ne'er has this love for thee fallen away:
Still with faith and affection I serve and obey.
Then wilt thou refuse thy heart's secret to tell,
A stranger to her who has served thee so well?
Tell me the cause of this wild unrest,
Of this heavy heart in a youthful breast.
Why are thy roses so faded? Why
Is thy warm breath turned to a cold cold sigh?
Why, sun as thou art, wilt thou wane like the moon,
And long for the eve ere the height of thy noon?
Some moon has bewitched thee. But, darling, say
What moon is he that has crossed thy way.
If he be an angel in heaven above,
A child of pure light, who has gained thy love,
By adoration and stress of prayer
I will draw him down from the glories there.

If a Peri, dwelling in waste and hill,
My trade and my strength is in magic skill.
The might of my spells shall the spirit confine
In a glassy prison and make him thine.
And soon shall thy bosom be glad, if a son
Of the race of Adam thy heart has won.
For what son of earth would refuse to see
His lady, and mistress, and queen in thee ? ”

She ceased ; and the heart of Zulaikha was stirred
By the tale of magic and love she heard.
Her only hope was the truth to speak,
While her tears were as stars to the moon of her cheek :
“ Unseen is the treasure I long for. The key
Of the treasure-house door is lost to me.
How can I tell where the bird may rest
Who makes with the phoenix of story his nest ?
Yet the fabled phoenix is known to fame,
While the bird of my love has not even a name.
How sweet is their longing, compared with mine,
Who can name the dear object for which they pine !
Though bitter the thought that they may not meet,
Yet to name the beloved one ever is sweet.”

Then the faithful nurse was honoured, and shared
The secret the love-lorn maiden declared.
The tale of the vision made watchful her eyes,
And the senseless love-swoon made her active and wise.

Scarce a line in the book of that heart had she read,
And the hope to aid her was cold and dead.
For that line was conjecture and vain surmise,
And where can be searching with blinded eyes?
She could open no prison to free Love's slave,
But she opened her lips in the counsel she gave:
"The hand of the Devs in this trouble I trace,
For guile and deceit is the joy of their race.
They raise bright phantoms and overthrow
Our maddened brain's empire with empty show."
"Nay," cried Zulaikha, "weak, weak were their skill,
To show the rare beauty that haunts me still.
And poor frail woman could ne'er give birth
To an angel fairer than children of earth."
"Why trouble thy soul," said the nurse, "for a dream
Whose forms are but fancy and only seem?"
"If the dream had been false it had never misled
A true-hearted maiden," Zulaikha said;
"For the maxim of sages is, all the world through,
'The false to the false, and the true to the true.'"
"Thou art wise and prudent," she answered; "strive
The thought of the dream from thy breast to drive."
"Had I strength," said Zulaikha, "the thought to control,
This crushing weight never had pressed on my soul.
But counsel is feeble the load to withstand,
And the reins of my purpose fall loose from my hand.

On my heart the fair vision I saw in my sleep
Is engraved as on stone, and the letters are deep.
The flood may rush o'er them, wild winds blow in vain,
For the lines that are graven on rock will remain."
The sad nurse ceased from the vain assay
To counsel where Love held his paramount sway.
To Zulaikha's father the tale she confessed,
And wild was the grief of his troubled breast,
But the hand of counsel might lend no aid,
And Fate must be guide of the life of the maid.

The Second Vision.

SUPREMEPLY blest is the bosom where
Love rules unfettered by earthly care ;
Whence fire to the flash of the lightning is lent,
That on garner's of wisdom and patience is spent.
Thought may not vex it for life or fame,
And light as a straw is a mountain of blame.
For Love laughs at the counsel which Wisdom would
 give,
And reproach is the food that will help him to live.
Twelve months Zulaikha declined and sank,
And the fair full moon to a crescent shrank.
One eve she sat curved like the young moon with woe,
And her eyes were red like the morning's glow.
"How hast thou dealt with me, Heaven?" she cried ;
"The sun of my glory has faded and died.
Like an archer's bow thou hast bent my frame,
And made me the mark of the arrow of blame.
Thou hast given my reins to rebellion ; beside
Rebellion my heart will acknowledge no guide.

That form made my bosom with love to glow,
But scarce in a dream his dear face will he show.
Never he comes when I watch and weep,
And he comes no more in a vision of sleep.
The sight of that world-lighting moon was a gleam
Of waking bliss and no empty dream.
With ceaseless watching these eyes are dim :
May my waking fortune give sleep to him !
For then would my fortune watch o'er me in truth,
And grant me a sight of that well-loved youth."

Hours of the night in this wild lament,
With her troubled soul at her lips, she spent.
Slumber at length lulled to rest her thought—
Slumber?—the swoon of a brain o'erwrought.
Ere she had rested her weary frame,
Again the sight that she longed for came.
The self-same form with a cheek more fair
Than the softest moonlight was standing there.
When her eye saw the face she remembered so well
She sprang from her couch and before it fell.
"Dear cypress," she cried, "with the grace of the rose,
Thou hast robbed me of patience and strength and repose.
By that Creator who fashioned thee
From the purest light where no stain may be.
Sweet as the Water of Life, a king
In beauty supreme o'er each living thing :

Who gave thee that lip for the spirit's food,
And that rose with a charm for the soul endued ;
Who gave bloom to that cheek and soft light to those eyes,
Where the moth of my heart flutters round till it dies ;
Who gave thee those musky tresses, a snare
Whereof my heart prizes each single hair ?
Give my lost heart the sweet pity I seek,
Open that ruby, thy mouth, and speak.
Speak in thy fulness of ravishing grace ;
Say who thou art and the name of thy race.
Art thou a gem ? From what mine dost thou spring ?
Where is thy palace if thou art a king ? ”

“ Of the children of Adam,” his answer came ;
“ Earth and water composed my frame.
Now if the words of thy lips be true,
That my love has pierced thy young bosom through,
Ne'er from thy promise and faith must thou swerve,
But thy troth unplighted for me reserve.
Beware, sweet maiden ; let no one sip
The sugar that lies on thy virgin lip.
That lip and thy heart and thy love must be
Preserved from others and kept for me.
Think not the heart in this bosom is cold
And returns not the love which thy lips have told.
The net of thy charms o'er my heart is thrown,
And the brand of thy love marks me out as thine own.”

Soon as the maid from his lips had heard
That his answering breast with her loved was stirred,
Anew o'er her bosom the frenzy came,
And her soul like a moth fluttered fast to the flame.
She arose from the thought of that vision of night,
And the flame that consumed her rose fierce and bright.
Wild and more wild grew her sorrow ; her sighs
Went up from her heart like a cloud to the skies.
Her hand cast the rein of her prudence away ;
No prayer could move her, no counsel stay.
She tore, till a rosebud, her soul's veil apart,
And poured down, like a tulip, the blood of her heart.
She wounded her cheek because his was so fair,
And tore, when she thought of his tresses, her hair.
Her maidens about her sate close in a ring
As ye see round the moon a fair halo cling.
Had the chain been unlinked, like an arrow sped
From a bended bow far away she had fled.
That circle of maidens her garment held,
Or forth she had rushed by her frenzy impelled.
The bud of her will was fast bound, or her feet
Like a rose deflowered had sought the street.
When her father was ware of her madness, he sought
From the sages a cure for her mind distraught.
Through the paths of wisdom they roamed in vain,
And could find no counsel but bond and chain.

So they brought her a serpent of burnished gold,
With ruby and pearl on each twisted fold,
Like the watchful guardian of treasure,¹ round
Her silver ankle the snake was bound.
Each treasure is watched by a serpent. Where
Was a treasure of beauty so rich and rare?
Soon as the snake 'neath her mantle slept,
She uttered these pearls with the pearls she wept:
"My heart is the captive of Love. My chains
Are dearer than all that the world contains.
Why will life-wasting Heaven with its sleight of
hand
Make heavy my foot with the weight of this band?
To me, of all vigour and strength bereft,
Scarce is the power of motion left.
Why drive this sword through my bosom? Why
Let this heavy chain on my weak foot lie?
Deep is the cypress-tree rooted in clay,
And hard were the task would it move away.
About its foot will the gardener cast
His chains of water to bind it fast?
Not me, my heart's robber in chains ye should bind
Who stole in a moment my peace of mind;
Who would not stay near his victim till
On his tulip face she had gazed her fill.

¹ A serpent is supposed to be the guardian of hidden treasures.

Like the flash of the lightning he fled from mine eyes,
And uprose from my heart a thick cloud of sighs.
If happy Fortune should favour at last,
With this chain of gold I would bind him fast.
While I chose I would gaze on his cheek's fair bloom,
And his eyes should lighten my days of gloom.
Did I say I would bind the soft darling? Nay,
If a grain of dust on his instep lay,
A mountain's weight on my soul it would be,
And the carpet of joy would be folded for me.
Would I lay on his heart a load heavy to bear,
Or his silver ankle with fetters wear?
No; my heart with a thousand daggers be torn
Ere his robe be pierced by a single thorn."

Of the wishes she uttered in deep lament
One, only one, to its aim was sent.
For with mangled heart to the earth she fell
Like a bird when the fowler has aimed too well.
Senseless awhile was her 'wildered brain,
But sense returned and renewed her pain.
Again love's flame in her bosom rose,
Again she recounted her tale of woes.
In her altering mood she would laugh or weep,
Now full of life, now as dead, or asleep.

Thus ever changing from day to day,
She lived while a year passed slowly away.

The Third Vision.

LOVE, with thy magic and guile, draw near,
 To whom now war and now peace is dear :
 Thou, who canst turn with the might of thy rule
 The fool to a sage, and the sage to a fool.
 When thy net is spread in a maiden's hair,
 Wisdom is caught in the maddening snare ;
 And when thy hand loosens the braided chain,
 The lamp of wisdom burns bright again.

Zulaikha, senseless in dark despair,
 The twin-sister of sorrow, embraced by care,
 Drank to the dregs of the bitter bowl,
 And found no rest for her love-lorn soul ;
 From her head in her passion the coif she drew,
 And dust on her amber-sweet tresses threw,
 Bent her cypress form to the earth in prayer,
 While the rosebuds of Iram were wild with despair.
 She wept red tears from narcissus eyes,
 And her tongue, like the lily's, gave words to her sighs,
 As with anguish deep in her tender breast,
 The youth of her vision she thus addressed :

“Thou hast robbed me of sense and of comfort, and left
The life of thy victim destroyed by the theft;
Thou hast pierced me with grief, and I sorrow alone;
Thou hast stolen my heart, and not given thine own.
I know not thy name for my lips to speak,
Nor thy home for my love-guided foot to seek.
Sweet as pure sugar was once my smile—
Like the sugar-cane now I am bound by thy guile.
Like a rose unveiled I am scorned, though a bud,
I drank for my love of the draughts of blood.
I claim not dear in thine eyes to be;
To be least of thy slaves were enough for me.
Some favour, at least, to thy servant show,
And deliver her soul from the fetters of woe.
May no maiden, as I am, with blood be stained,
None mocked by the people, like me, and disdained.
My mother weeps for the daughter she bore,
And my father delights in his child no more.
The maidens who served me are distant, and leave
Their love-lorn mistress alone to grieve.
And by thee are lighted the fires that feed
On my helpless heart like a worthless weed.”

Thus, ere sleep o'er her senses stole,
She reproached the idol that filled her soul.
When her eyes were heavy with sleep's soft dew,
Came the thief of her rest in a vision anew.

Words would fail me to tell how fair
Was the wondrous beauty she looked on there.
The hem of his garment was fast in her hold,
And over his feet her hot weepings rolled.
And she cried: "O thou, for whose dear love flies
All calm from my bosom, all sleep from mine eyes,
By the Pure One who made thee so pure from thy birth,
And chose thee most fair of the beauties of earth,
Pity the anguish I suffer, disclose
Thy name and thy city, and lighten my woes."

He answered: "If this may content thee, hear:
In Egypt's land I am Grand Vizier.
Mid her proudest princes my place is high,
And the trusted friend of the king am I."

These words from her idol Zulaikha heard,
And her spirit, long dead, with new life was stirred,
In the quickening balm of his sweet voice came
To her soul new patience, and strength to her frame.
She rose from her dream, and her heart was gay;
The cloud of madness had passed away.
Again, recalling the words that brought
Joy to her heart in her loving thought,
She cried to the maidens about her: "You
Who shared the keen sorrow that pierced me through,
Bear the glad news to my father; free
His heart from the grief that he feels for me.

Say that my senses are troubled no more,
And the stream flows clear as it flowed before.
Say: 'Be not thou as the misers are,
But release thy treasure from lock and bar.
Come, loose my foot from the golden chain,
For I fear not the fury of madness again.'"

When the joyful news to the king was brought,
He flew to his daughter like one distraught.
He opened the jaws of the snake and unrolled
From the silver-armed maiden the coil of gold.
Her damsels bowed them before her feet,
And prepared for their lady a royal seat,
Where they placed her with dutiful hands, and set
On her fair brow a glittering coronet.
Her Peri-faced maidens about her came,
Drawn by her beauty as moths by the flame.
Pleasant and gay were Zulaikha's words,
And her voice was sweet as a musical bird's;
The seal of the casket of speech she broke,
And of many a city and country spoke,
And of Shám and Rúm, and sugar ran down
From her lips at mention of Egypt's renown;¹
Of the deeds that her people had done of old,
Of the Grand Vizier and his state she told.

¹ Egypt (Mísr) was famous for sugar, which in India is still called *misrí*.

When she spoke of the title she loved so well,
As falls a shadow, to earth she fell ;
She rained down blood from the cloud of her eyes,
And the voice of her weeping went up to the skies.

Thus passed her day and her night ; of naught
Save her love and his country she spoke or thought.
When she mentioned his title, her voice was glad,
Else she lay sullen and silent and sad.

The Suitors.

ZULAIKHA lay pining. The world no less
 Was filled with the fame of her loveliness,
 And her beauty, whispered from land to land,
 Unseen, was a spell which no heart could withstand.
 Slaves to the might of the maid's renown,
 Enamoured princes and kings bowed down,
 And again and again for the love of her
 Sent trusty herald and messenger.

One day in her calmer moments she
 Sate high on her throne, from her frenzy free,
 Envoys of kings of each distant land,
 From famous Rúm and from Syria's strand,
 More than a hundred, about her pressed,
 And in her bright presence at length had rest.
 One bore a list of the realms of his king,
 And one on his finger showed Solomon's ring.
 Each with the gift of a monarch came
 To woo the fair maid in his master's name.
 "The land she may shine on will see the town
 Where its queen dwells graced with a matchless crown,

And her feet shall be set upon diadems strewn
In the streets of the city she makes her own.
If she pour on Damascus her soft moonlight
They will bless their lady from morn till night.
If Rúm be her choice, her glad slaves will be
All nations from Rúm to the Indian Sea."

Thus mid the envoys' assembly, each
Spoke for his master a suitor's speech.
Zulaikha, 'ware of the aims they sought,
Was tossed on the billows of anxious thought:
"Has the land of Egypt no envoy sent?
With the love of her people my heart is bent.
As Egypt's land to my soul is most dear,
What boots it if none from that realm is here?
The soft wind blowing from Egypt's sand,
Bringing dust to mine eyes from that happy land,
Sweeter a hundredfold would be
Than the musk-laden breezes of Tartary."

Thus in the depth of her heart she cried;
And thus spoke the king as she sate by his side:
"Thou light of mine eyes and my spirit's joy,
Sweet charter, exempting from care and annoy,
Kings through the world for their beauty known,—
Each lord of a crown and ancestral throne,—
Are suitors for thee, while their bosoms bleed,
Filled with the growth of Love's maddening seed.

Afire with the hope of my daughter's hand,
They have sent their envoys from every land.
I will speak of the herald of each who sues,
And try which king it may please thee to choose.
Of the country to which thy free heart may incline
I will make thee queen, and its people thine."

Still and silent Zulaikha remained;
For the loved one's name her fond ear she strained,
For 'tis sweet to listen in hope to hear
The name breathed forth which we hold most dear.
He spoke of them all from the first to the last,
But the land of Egypt unnamed was past.
His tale was done; and Zulaikha knew
That from Egypt—his home—there was none to woo.
She rose to her feet with one hopeless look,
And with grief, like the spray of a willow, shook.
Pearls on the lash of her eye were strung,
And she cried, as the blood from her heart was wrung:
"O that my mother had never born
Or fed from her bosom her child forlorn!
What star that frowned on my natal hour
Has darkened my fate with its evil power?
If a cloud were to rise from the distant main,
On every lip it would pour sweet rain,
But if to my thirsty mouth it came
It would bring no water but scorching flame.

What sin, O Heaven, in me hast thou known
That blood has reddened my skirts like thine own ?¹
Though I may not fly to the love of my heart,
Think not 'tis distance that keeps us apart.
Wilt thou have me die ? I am dead even now,
And the cruel cause of my death art thou.
Wilt thou see me troubled and sore distressed ?
A mountain of woe hast thou laid on my breast.
What matter to thee if my life be glad,
Sweet or bitter, joyous or sad ?
What is my being, and what am I ?
What matter to thee if I live or die ?
Should I cast my life to the wind he would scorn,
Mid a hundred harvests, my single corn.
He hurries a thousand fresh roses away,
Which thou hast delivered to death and decay.
When bright blooms unpitied are torn from the
stem,
Will it trouble his heart if I perish with them ? ”

She wailed through the livelong day ; like a bud
Her heart was filled full to the brim with blood.
A deluge of tears from her eyes she shed,
And the hand of sorrow threw dust on her head.

When her father knew that her troubled breast
With the love of Egypt's Vizier was possessed,

¹ The sun-flushed horizon.

He dismissed the envoys with friendly speech,
And with princely presents he honoured each :
“ Already to Egypt’s Grand Vizier
Pledged was the troth of my daughter dear :
And ye know full well—for your hearts are wise—
That the first in the race ever wins the prize.
I hold this proverb the best of all,
‘To the lot of the first must the treasure fall.’ ”

Thus, baffled in hope, with defeated aim,
The royal envoys went as they came.

The Ambassador.

DAY by day Zulaikha's despair
 Grew a weight too heavy for her to bear.
 In blank pale longing, though overcast
 With the black hue of sorrow, her days were passed.
 The father pitied the maiden's grief
 And counselled thus for her soul's relief :
 " A prudent envoy I needs must send
 To Egypt's Vizier that her woe may end,
 A tender message from her to bear,
 That the bonds of love may unite the pair."

He chose a chamberlain deeply skilled :
 With praise of his wisdom his ear he filled,
 And with many a present most rich and rare
 Bade him to Egypt's vizier repair,
 And say : " O Prince on whose threshold lies
 Dust that is kissed by the circling skies,
 May the favour of Heaven increase each day
 Thy fame and honour and princely sway.
 In the House of Purity shines my Sun
 By whose splendour the envious moon is outdone.

Higher her place than the moon's, I ween :
Her shadow never the sun has seen.
Purer than pearls in their virgin shells
Her splendour the lustre of stars excels.
She veils her moonlight from the world, and debars
From the sight of her beauty the curious stars.
Only her comb may loosen each tress,
And her mirror behold her loveliness.
Only the coils of her hair are blest
On her delicate foot for a while to rest.
The hem of her mantle—and only this—
As she walks in the courtyard her foot may kiss.
Never her chin has been touched by her maid,
On her lip not the sugar-cane's finger laid.
She shrinks away from that flower who throws
The veil of her beauty aside, the rose.
From the sweet narcissus her eyes decline,
For its blossom is heavy and drunk with wine.
Even her shadow's pursuit she would shun,
And fly from the lustre of moon and sun.
To the stream and the fountain she will not repair
Lest her eye should meet her reflexion there.
She dwells in her home behind screen and bar,
But the fame of her beauty is known afar.
A hundred kings with their hearts on fire
In eager hope to her hand aspire.

From Rúm to Damascus beyond the flood
Each heart for her love has drunk deep of blood.
But longing for Egypt has filled her breast,
And she turns her eye and her heart from the rest.
For Rúm she can find in that heart no room,
And gay Damascus is naught but gloom.
Her eye towards Egypt has marked the road,
And the Nile of her tears has for Egypt flowed.
I know but her longing ; I know not the cause,
Or the charm that to Egypt her spirit draws.
'Tis her destined home, and from Egypt came
The dust, I ween, that composed her frame.
If in thy sight it seem good, I have planned
To send her to thee in her chosen land.
If she be not peerless in beauty and grace
She may hold in thy palace a menial's place."

The Grand Vizier heard the speech, and, amazed,
To the highest heaven his head was raised.
He bowed and made answer : " And what am I
That a seed of this doubt in my heart should lie ?
The grace of thy lord lifts me up from the mire,
And 'tis meet that my head to the heavens aspire.
I am the dust which the cloud of spring
Bedews with the drops which he loves to fling.
If a hundred tongues like the grass-blades grew,
My tongues to thank him were all too few.

The grace of the monarch is guarantee
That Fortune ever shall favour me.
With the head of my foot, with the eyes of my shoe,
I would hasten to meet him, his pleasure to do.
But to Egypt's ruler, the great and wise,
I am bound so closely by duty's ties,
That, were I absent a single hour,
I should feel the weight of the sword of his power.
Then pardon the servant whom duties bind,
And impute not the blame to a haughty mind.
Should the king thy lord to my prayer attend,
Two hundred litters of gold will I send
With thousands of boys and maidens, all
Like the Túbá-tree,¹ graceful, and straight, and tall;
Those boys are noble, and free from vice,
And purer than children of Paradise.
Their laughing lips are most sweet, with rare
Pearl and ruby they bind their hair;
With caps coquettishly set on the side
Of their heads, on saddles of gold they ride.
And the maidens are robed like the Houris; they
Are pure of all blemish of water and clay.
Above their bright faces are full-drawn bows,
And their sweet locks shadow their cheeks of rose.

¹ *Túbá* is the name of a tree in Paradise.

All gems and jewels their beauty adorn,
And veiled in litters of gold are they borne.
Their guides shall be elders, the pillars of State,
Prudent in council, and wise in debate,
To receive the fair maid with due honour, and bring
To my humble home the sweet child of the king."

He ceased: the envoy bowed down his head,
And kissed the ground at his feet, and said:
"Spring of the glory of Egypt, thou
Hast added a grace to thy favours now.
But send no escort; my lord will provide
From his ample household a train for the bride.
The boys and the delicate maids who dwell
In his courts are too many for number to tell;
Robes of honour in store has he,
More than the leaves of a shady tree,
Showering gems from a liberal hand
More than the desert has grains of sand;
To please thee only his wish is bent,
And blest is the man with whom he is content.
If the vintage be worthy thy table, he
Will quickly send the sweet fruit to thee."

The Departure.

To release Zulaikha's sad heart from pain
 From Egypt returned the wise chamberlain,
 And even the selfish rejoiced to hear
 The message he brought from the Grand Vizier.
 Her rose of felicity bloomed anew,
 And the Humá¹ of fortune above her flew.
 A dream had bound her in fetters: she
 Saw a vision again and her soul was free.
 So ever from dream or from fancy springs
 The joy or the sorrow which this world brings.
 Most happy is he who from both can fly,
 And lightly pass the dread whirlpool by.

Her father rejoiced, and with care and speed
 He prepared the escort the bride would need.
 Thousands of maids in their youthful bloom
 He chose from the fairest of Rús² and Rúm.

¹ The *humá* is a fabulous bird whose shadow falling on a man's head denotes that he will become a king.

² Russia.

Their breasts were pomegranates, their mouths,
half-shut,
Showed each like a tender pistachio-nut,
And over each bosom and cheek was spread
The sweet faint flush of a young rosebed.
Orient pearls from their fine ears hung,
And black bows over their eyes were strung,
Pure of all dye as the leaves of the rose
In the cool of the morning when zephyr blows.
On tulip blossoms fell scented curls,
And on rounded necks was the glimmer of pearls ;
And a thousand boys with bright eyes that took
The heart of a maiden with each long look,
With red caps stuck on their heads oblique,
And loose locks shading each youthful cheek.
Each of his gold-hued garment was vain,
'Twas soft as the rosebud, and tight as the cane.
Each tress escaping, as loosely it flowed,
Like spikenard under a tulip showed.
Their jewelled belts round their fine waists
clung,
And a hundred hearts on their bright hair hung.
There were thousand horses of noble breed,
Gentle to saddle, unmatched in speed ;
With paces easy as rivulets, all
Fleeter at need than the flying ball.

If they saw but the shade of a falling lash,
Away from the race-course of Time would they dash.
Swift as wild asses they scoured the plain,
And like birds of the water they swam the main.
Their tails were knotted like canes; the dint
Of their strong hoofs shattered the hardest flint.
They flew o'er the hill like an even lawn,
But stayed their speed when the rein was drawn.

And a thousand camels, a wondrous sight,
With their mountain backs and their stately height.
Mountains, supported on pillars, were they,
And the course of their tempest no hand might stay.
Like holy hermits, their food was spare;
Burthens they bore as the patient bear.
Through a hundred deserts unwearied they went,
With thorns, as with spikenard and rose, content.
They tasted no food and they closed no eye,
But toiled on through the sand at the drivers' cry,
A hundred loads from the royal store,
Each the yearly yield of a province, they bore;
Two hundred carpets of rich brocade,
In Rúm and Damascus and Egypt made;
Two hundred caskets of gems most rare,—
Pearls, sapphires, Badakhshán's rubies were there;
Two hundred trays with fine musk therein,
And amber, and aloe from Comorin.

Like a meadow in China each spot was bright
Where the driver rested his camels at night.

Her father's care for Zulaikha supplied
A litter fair as the bed of a bride.
Of the wood of the aloe its frame was made,
And the well-joined boards were with gold o'erlaid.
Its gold-wrought awning was bright as the sun,—
Jamshíd¹ never boasted a brighter one.

Pearl in clusters, and many a pin
And stud of gold decked it without and within ;
And finest needlework graced each fold
Of the heavy hangings of tissue of gold.

Thus with imperial pomp and pride
They carried to Memphis the beautiful bride.
Her litter was borne by swift steeds, as the rose
Is wafted by winds from her place of repose.
Her maidens followed, with figures fine
As the graceful cypress, the plane, or the pine ;
With arm and bosom and cheek and hair
Like jasmine sweet or like jasmine fair.
You had said that the bloom of the young spring-
time
Was fleeting away to a distant clime.
Iram's garden envied the spot which those
Bright flowers of the palace to rest them chose ;

¹ A celebrated Persian king, the builder of Persepolis.

Where the boys dismounting their pastime took,
And the girls from their litters shot many a look,
And spread the fine net of their beautiful hair
Till each captured her prey in the silken snare ;
And each boy shot from his eye a dart
That enslaved a maiden and touched her heart.
Here were seen gallantry, glances, and smiles,
The lover's wooing, the maiden's wiles.
Lovers and loved were assorted well,
Those eager to buy and these ready to sell.
Thus each stage of the journey they passed,
And Memphis city was gained at last.

Zulaikha—for Fortune now seemed her friend—
Had longed in her heart for the journey's end,
When the dawn should rise on her night of woe
And the pangs of the parted no more she should know.
But oh ! black is the night that before her lies ;
'Tis an age till the sun of her joy shall rise.

Through the glare of day, through the gloom of night,
They travelled, and Memphis was now in sight.
From the city a messenger came at speed—
Whose litter the coming pomp should precede
To bring the glad news to the Grand Vizier,
That she whom he looked for was near, was near.
“ Rise up, rise up, and with eager feet
Thy bliss who approaches go forth to meet.”

The Welcome.

To the Grand Vizier the glad news was brought,
 And he deemed he had compassed each aim he sought.
 He bade proclamation be made, and all
 The army of Memphis obeyed the call,
 That with full equipment and arms complete,
 At the place appointed the hosts should meet.

From head to foot they were bright to behold,
 Smothered in jewels, and sheen of gold.
 Myriad boys and maidens were there,
 With cheeks of the rose, and like full moons fair.
 Like a palm-tree of gold in the saddle set,
 Showed each youth with his collar and coronet,
 And bright in her charms with their sevenfold aid,¹
 Screened in her litter of gold was each maid;
 Loudly in triumph glad voices rang
 As sweet-toned singers in unison sang,
 The harp of the minstrel was strung anew,
 And the music he made was of triumph too.

¹ *Hemra* for the hands ; *surma* or *kuhl* for the eyes ; *wasma* for the eyebrows ; rouge and *sapedáb*, or white water, for the face ; and bracelets and anklets. Other enumerations are also given.

Of meeting and pleasure the soft flute spoke,
And tender thoughts in each heart awoke,
While sorrow fled far at the merry din
Of the drum, and rebeck, and violin.

Thus in jubilee blithe and gay,
The escort from Memphis pursued its way.
Three stages, as journeys the moon, they passed,
And the sun of beauty was reached at last.
To a smooth and spacious meadow they came,
Studded with thousands of domes of flame,
You had said that the sky had poured down on the plain
Its brightest stars in a golden rain.
There rose a pavilion, girt with a wall
Of chosen sentinels, high over all.
Laughed the Vizier as he saw it gleam,
As the orient laughs with the first sunbeam.
Swift from his steed he alighted and bent
His eager steps to the royal tent.
The harem warders came forth to meet
The noble, and bowed to the earth at his feet.
He asked of their lady, and bade them say,
What of the weather and toil of the way.

Of the princely gifts that were with him, those
That were fairest and best in his sight he chose:
Sweet-smiling boys of his own household,
With caps and girdles ablaze with gold;

High-bred horses with golden gear,
Covered with jewels from croup to ear;
Raiment of satin and woven hair,
And pearls from his storehouse most rich and rare;
Sugar of Egypt, with care refined,
And sherbet of every colour and kind—
All on the spacious plain were arrayed,
And with courteous words his excuses he made.
He ordered the march at the break of day,
When homeward again he would bend his way.

Despair.

THE ancient Hraven delights to cheat
The children of earth with his vain deceit.
The heart of the lover with hope he will stay,
And then dashes the idle phantom away.
The fruit that he longed for was shown afar,
And his bosom will bear through his life a scar.

A shadow lay on the ground, and near
Zulaikha's tent stood the Grand Vizier.
She dropped the rein of patience and prayed
For one glance at her love with her nurse's aid.
"O thou whose affection through life I have tried,
I can bear this longing no longer," she cried.
"Near a cup of sweet water the thirsty lip
Is maddened with pain if it may not sip."

The faithful nurse marked the maiden's grief,
And looked round the wall for a way of relief.
With her crafty finger she made a rent
Like a narrow eye in the cloth of the tent.
Zulaikha looked through with an eager eye,
But heaved from her bosom a long sad sigh:

“ Ah me ! that so wondrous a fate should befall !
Low in the dust lies my half-built wall.
This is not the youth of my vision, he
Whom after long troubles I hoped to see ;
Who seized the rein of my heart and stole
With his magic power my sense and soul ;
Who told me his secret and gently brought
Reason again to a mind distraught.
Alas ! the star of my hapless fate
Has left me deceived and disconsolate.
Palm-trees I planted, but thistles grew :
I sowed Love’s seed, but the harvest is rue.
I endured for my treasure long sorrows and toils,
But the guardian dragon my labour foils.
I would cull the rose for the precious scent,
But, alas ! my robe with the thorn is rent.
I am one athirst in a desert land,
Seeking for water and mocked with sand.
Dry is my tongue with unbearable thirst,
And the blood from my feverous lip would burst.
I see at a distance fair water gleam,
And I struggle and crawl to the tempting stream,
And find no water but sand whereon
Deluding beams of the bright sun shone.
A camel am I, on the mountain strayed,
With a mountain of hunger and toil down-weighed.

The stones are sharp and my feet are sore :
I fear to stay but can move no more.
A form I see with my blood-shot eye,
And I deem that my lost companion is nigh.
My weary steps to his side I bend :
'Tis a ravening lion and not my friend.
I am a sailor ; my vessel sank,
And I float forlorn on a single plank.
On the restless wave I am tossed on high
And low in the depths of the ocean lie.
A light skiff near me comes on o'er the wave,
And my heart is glad, for it comes to save.
Nearer and nearer my rescue draws :
Ah ! 'tis a shark with his cruel jaws.
Ah me ! of unfortunate lovers none
Is helpless as I am, ah no, not one.
My heart is stolen, my lover is fled :
A stone lies on my back and dust on my head.
O Heaven ! pity my many woes
And a door of hope, in thy mercy, unclose.
If Thou wilt not bring my dear love to my side,
Oh save me from being another's bride.
Preserve the pure name of the hapless maid,
No polluting touch on her vesture laid.
I made a vow to my lover, mine own,
To keep my love ever for him alone.

Ah, let not grief my poor heart consume,
Nor give to a dragon my virgin bloom."

Thus she ceased not to sigh and complain,
And tears on her eyelashes hung like rain.
Transfix'd with anguish her young heart bled,
And low in the dust lay her beautiful head.
Then the Bird of Comfort¹ came near, and there fell
On her ear the sweet message of Gabriel:
"Lift thy head, sad maiden, and cease to repine,
For easy shall be this sore burthen of thine.
The Vizier is not he whom thou longest to gain,
But without him thy wish thou canst never attain.
Through him wilt thou look on thy loved one's eyes,
And through him at last thou wilt win the prize."

Zulaikha heard, and in grateful trust
Bowed down humbly her head to the dust.
She ceased from weeping, and strove like a bud
To drink in silence her own heart's blood.
Fraught with deep grief was each breath that came,
But speechless she suffered woe's scorching flame.
Her eyes, though eager, must look and wait,
Till the knot shall be loosed by the hand of Fate.

¹ Gabriel, the messenger of Heaven.

The Reception.

WITH a drum of gold the bright firmament beat
At morn the signal for night's retreat.
The stars with the night at the coming of day
Broke up their assembly and passed away.
From that drum, gold-scattering, light was shed,
Like a peacock's glorious plumes outspread.

In princely garb the Vizier arrayed,
Placed in her litter the moon-bright maid.
In the van, in the rear, on every side,
He ordered his soldiers about the bride,
And golden umbrellas a soft shade threw
O'er the heads of Zulaikha's retinue.
The singers' voices rang loud and high,
As the camels moved at the drivers' cry,
And the heaven above, and below, the ground
Echoed afar with the mingled sound.

Glad were the maids of Zulaikha's train
That their lady was free from her sorrow and pain ;
And the prince and his people rejoiced that she
The idol and queen of his house should be.

Alone in her litter she wept her woes,
And her lamentation to Heaven arose :
“ Why hast thou treated me thus, O Fate,
And left me unhappy and desolate ?
For what sin against thee, what fault of mine,
Hast thou left me hopeless to weep and pine ?
Thou stolest my heart in a dream, like a thief,
And I awoke but to suffer still bitterer grief.
But if thou hast ruined my life, mine all,
Why, in my folly, on thee do I call ?
Nay, at the moment when help was near,
Thou hast torn me from home, and from all that was
dear.

Beneath the weight of one sorrow I bent,
And thou addest the burthen of banishment.
If thine only aid is to rend the breast,
Oh ! what must she feel whom thou torturest !
Break not the cup of my patience, nor set,
Again to ensnare me, thy terrible net.
Thine was the promise that, sorrows passed,
I should find sweet rest for my soul at last.
With thy word of comfort I fain was content ;
But is this the rest that the promise meant ? ”

Thus Zulaikha, weary and faint
With her burthen of sorrow, poured forth her
plaint.

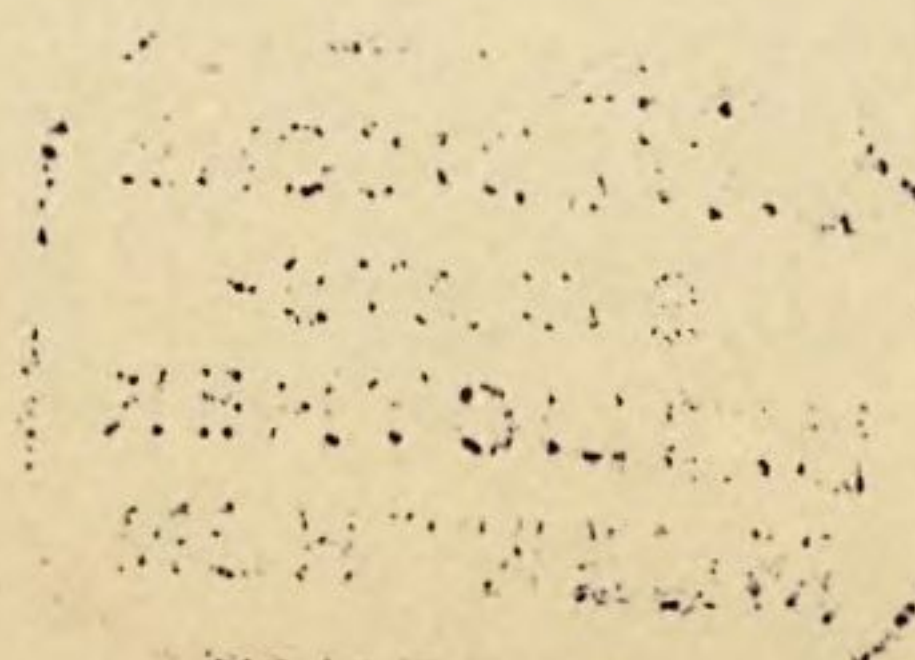
Loud rose the cry of the host meanwhile,
"Memphis! Memphis! the Nile! the Nile!"
Horse and foot onward in tumult hied,
And rejoicing, stood on the river's side.

To the Grand Vizier, as by duty taught,
Trays piled high with treasures they brought,
To lade the bride's litter with wealth untold,
Of the rarest jewels and finest gold.
Each brought his gift, and a mighty cry,
Welcome! welcome! went up to the sky.
On the head of Zulaikha fell pearl in showers
As the rain of spring on the opening flowers
Till the lady's litter beneath a heap
Of countless jewels was buried deep.
Wherever the feet of the camels trod,
They trampled jewels, not sand or sod.
When the spark leapt forth at the courser's dint,
The shoe and the ruby were steel and flint;
In ranks extended o'er many a mile,
Still scattering jewels, they left the Nile,
And the rain of pearl from their hands that fell
Made each fish's gill like a pearl-rich shell,
And the countless dirhams they cast therein
Made the crocodile gleam with a silver skin.

Thus the escort in proud array,
To the prince's palace pursued their way;

Nay, 'twas an earthly paradise ; sun
And moon in their splendour were here outdone.
In the midst of the palace was set a throne,
Fairest of all that the world has known.
The hand of a skilful artist had made
The glorious seat with fine gems o'erlaid.
Close to the throne her litter was placed,
And the seat by that jewel of ladies graced.
But still no rest to her sad soul came,
The gold she pressed was as burning flame.
The peerless maiden was brighter yet
Than the throne and the crown on her forehead set.
But the glittering crown that her temples pressed
Increased the mountain of woe in her breast ;
They showered pearl on her head like rain :
It tortured her heart like a flood of pain.
Pearls, the desire of the maids of the sky,
Filled with the pearls of her tears her eye.

In the battle of Love, who cares for a crown,
When a hundred heads to the dust go down ?
Who for the loveliest pearl will care,
When her eye is damp with the dew of despair ?
Shame on the wretch who would value a throne,
When his love is lost, and he pines alone !



Pining.

WHEN the heart has found with its darling rest,
 Will it turn to welcome a meaner guest ?
 Will the moth spread her wings in the warm sunlight,
 When the sheen of the lamp has attracted her flight ?
 In vain for the bulbul sweet basil is strown,
 For he lives for the love of the rose alone.
 If the rising sun bids the lotus wake,
 Will she glance at the moon from her native lake ?

In a palace meet for the mightiest kings,
 Zulaikha saw round her all precious things.
 The Grand Vizier was her watchful slave ;
 Gold and treasure unasked he gave.
 Maidens, lovely, with cheeks of rose,
 Served her ever, nor sought repose ;
 Slave-girls, whose ravishing glances were sweet,
 Sate waiting her pleasure about her feet ;
 And boys in silk raiment, a goodly train,
 Young, fresh, and sweet as the sugar-cane—
 Moorish pages of amber wrought,
 Pure as angels, in word and thought—

G



Duteously served in the harem, all
Ready to come at their lady's call.

Many a young and lovely dame
Of Memphis to visit Zulaikha came ;
They delighted to talk with the bride, her peers
In graceful stature and youthful years.
She received her guests in the corridor, where
Stranger and friend might her welcome share ;
She spread the carpet of joy, and while
Her heart was bleeding, her lip had a smile.
She spoke and listened ; her look was gay,
But her heart was in pain, ah ! far away.
By her absent lover her soul was claimed,
Though words of welcome her sweet lip framed.

When night o'er her face a dark curtain had thrown,
She withdrew, like a moon, to her chamber alone.
On the pedestal raised by her love she set
The dear, dear form she could never forget ;
Humbly before it her knee she bent,
And poured out her grief in a wild lament ;
While the harp of her love with a mournful air,
Kept time with the outburst of deep despair :
" Didst thou not tell me, O thou most dear
To this longing heart, that thy home was here,
The Grand Vizier of the kingdom ? How
I wish that thine were the title now !

Thine honour the crown of my head would be,
And to live thy slave were enough for me ;
I pine in Egypt, forlorn, unknown,
Hopeless of meeting with thee, mine own.
How long to this terrible fate am I doomed ?
How long shall my heart in this flame be consumed ?
Come, be the light of my garden ; calm
The pangs of my soul with thy healing balm.
In the deep of despair for my lover I pined,
But an angel came and left hope behind ;
That hope has driven my doubt away,
And is still my life's consolation and stay.
By the light of thy beauty that lives in my heart,
I know we shall meet, yes, never to part.
Tears of hot blood these sad eyes ever fill,
But in all the six regions¹ they yearn for thee
still.

How blessed, my love, will the time be when
I shall look once more on my moon of men.
I shall roll up the carpet of life when I see
Thy dear face again, and shall cease to be.
For self will be lost in that rapture, and all
The threads of my thought from my hand will fall ;
Not me wilt thou find, for this self will have fled :
Thou wilt be my soul in mine own soul's stead.

¹ Above, below, right, left, before, and behind.

All thought of self will be swept from my mind,
And thee, only thee, in my place shall I find ;
More precious than heaven, than earth more dear,
Myself were forgotten if thou wert near."

Thus through the night in her anguish she spoke,
Nor ceased her complaint till the morning broke.
At the first faint breath of the young day's breeze,
She changed her lament into words like these :
" Wind of the morning, whose soft touch floods
With musky odour the jasmine buds,
That makes the cypress and lily so fair,
And decks the rose-leaf and the spikenard's hair ;
Each leaf is a bell while the branches sway,
And the trees are dancing, though rooted in clay ;
The heart has rest when thy light wings stir,
For thou art the lover's fleet messenger.
From the distant beloved thou bringest news,
That bids the sad spirit forget its bruise.
And what beating heart has a woe like mine ?
What soul in such anguish can waste and pine ?
Bowed down with sorrow, my heart is faint,
Have pity upon me, and hear my plaint.
The world has no place where thou mayest not win
An easy entrance to breathe therein ;
By no gate of iron art thou opposed,
A window admits thee if doors are closed.

Pity me, visit each distant place
Where thy breath may fall on my loved one's face ;
Visit each palace where dwells a king,
Each prince's home, on thy balmy wing ;
Seek my moon in each city ; repair
To each throne and see if my king be there.
Steal through the garden where spring is gay,
On the lip of the streamlet a moment stay.
Peradventure, thine eye in the search may discover
By the rill the cypress form of my lover ;
Speed to the deserts of far Cathay,
And the picture-houses of China¹ survey.
Here look around for his likeness ; snare
A wild gazelle with his fragrance there.
When thou turnest back from those distant scenes,
Over mountain tops and through deep ravines,
If a partridge gracefully move from the brake,
Lay thy hand on the bird for my dear love's sake.
Shouldst thou meet on thy journey a caravan
Led by a gallant heart-ravishing man,
Look with mine eyes on that prince that he
May travel hither and come to me ;
One glance of his eye will assuage my woes,
And I from Hope's garden shall gather a rose."

¹ Allusions to the painters and pictures of China frequently occur in Persian poetry.

Thus, from the dawn till the sun rose high
And raced through the course of the noonday sky,
With blood in her eyes, in her heart unease,
She poured her complaint to the morning breeze,
And when the whole land with the full light glowed,
The light of her face to her friends she showed.
The maidens her fellows, each in her place,
Basked in the light of the lady's face ;
With those damsels, gay-hearted and pure as gay,
Her bearing changed not from day to day.
Thus, in the gloom of unceasing woe,
Month and year passed dreary and slow.
In the guarded bounds of the house confined,
For the fresh free air of the field she pined ;
Then seared with anguish, with woe forspent,
Like the mourning tulip she raised her tent.
To the tulip she spoke of the scars she bore,
And her love whom perchance she should see no more.
Like a torrent that sweeps down a deep defile,
She sped with wet eyes to the banks of Nile,
Confided to him her keen sorrow and gave
The flood of her tears to the rushing wave.

Thus, through the daylight she sorrowed and wept,
And the eye of hope on the road she kept,
If perchance her love, her true soul's delight,
Should rise like the sun or the moon on her sight.

Rise, Jaíní! rise! turn thy thought aside,
And the Moon of Canaan from Canaan guide.
In the heart of Zulaikha sweet hope is strong
As she looks on the road she has watched so long;
Too long has she waited, and hoped, and endured,
Let her lover come, and her heart be cured.

Envy.

SAGES, who guided the pen of old,
Thus the story have framed and told :
As Yúsuf in stature and beauty grew,
His father's heart to himself he drew ;
The old man turned from the rest aside
To his own eye's apple, his joy and pride ;
And to him such kindness and favour showed,
That the hearts of his brothers with envy glowed.

In the court of the house stood an ancient tree
Whose leafy branches were fair to see ;
In their vesture of green like monks the sprays
Danced in a rapture of joy and praise ;
From the level ground of the court it grew,
And its stately height a long shadow threw ;
Each leaf on the tree was a vocal tongue,
Singing a hymn as the branches swung.
To heaven rose the boughs of the topmost stem,
Whose birds were the angels who rested on them,

When a son to Jacob by God was given ;
From that tree that rivalled the Lote-tree¹ in heaven,
A tender branchlet sprouted anew,
And still with the growth of the infant grew ;
And when the boy came to his manhood he
Received a green staff from the honoured tree.
But for Yúsuf, first in his father's eyes,
A staff from the tree were too mean a prize ;
A severed bough were no gift for one
From his own soul's garden, his darling son.

One night the boy to his father cried :
" O thou whose wishes are ne'er denied,
To the Lord of Paradise offer thy prayer,
And win me a staff from the garden there,
That whithersoever my feet may stray,
From youth to age it may guide my way."

Humbly the father bowed down and prayed,
And suit to the Lord for his darling made.
Then Gabriel came from the Lote-tree's height,
A topaz staff in his hand shone bright,
That never had suffered a wound or flaw
From the axe of Time or from Change's saw,
Precious in value, but light to wield,
Splendid with hues of its native field.

¹ The Sidra or Lote-tree is the seat of the angel Gabriel in Paradise.

And a voice was heard: "Take the staff I bring,
Which shall prop, as a pillar, the throne of a king."

Thus Yúsuf by Heaven was favoured and blest;
But envy burnt fierce in each brother's breast.
A hundred wood staves were a lighter load
For them than this one which the Lord bestowed.
Fell fancy wrought in each bosom apart,
And each sowed the seed of deep hate in his heart;
He nursed the seedling with tender care,
But shame was the fruit which the tree should bear.

Yúsuf's Dream.

How blest is he who can close his eye
And let the vain pageants of life pass by ;
Untouched by the magic of earth can keep
His soul awake while the senses sleep ;
Scorn the false and the fleeting that meets the view,
And see what is hidden and firm and true.

Before the eyes of his sire one night,
Who loved him more than his own eyesight,
Yúsuf his head on a pillow laid,
And slept while a smile on his sweet mouth played.
But the heart of Jacob was troubled while
On that sleeping face he beheld the smile.
When, damp with the dew of their soft repose,
Those eyes of narcissus began to uncloze,
And, like his own fortune, the boy was awake.
Thus to his darling the father spake :
“ Why, O sweeter than sugar, didst thou
Wear a sugar-sweet smile on thy lip but now ? ”
And Yúsuf answered : “ Father, I dreamed,
And the sun and moon and eleven stars seemed

To gather about me, high honour to pay,
And their heads before me in dust to lay.”
“Beware,” said the father, “my son, beware;
Thy secret vision to none declare.
Let not thy brothers the story know:
In a hundred ways they would work thee woe.
With hatred and envy their heart is stirred;
They would hate thee more if the tale were heard.
The thought of this dream they would ne’er endure,
For the meaning thereof is too clear and sure.”
Thus, in his prudence the father spoke;
But Fate the chain of his counsel broke.
One with whom Yúsuf the secret shared,
To all the brothers the tale declared.
The secret that passes beyond a pair,
Is bruited abroad on the moving air.
“Yes,” said a sage, “but that pair are the lips,
And no secret is that which beyond them slips.”
The fury of carnage has oft been stirred,
And nobles have died for a spoken word.
Wise is the saw of the sage who said,
“Who heeds his secret will keep his head.”
When the wild bird flies from her cage, in vain
Will ye follow her flight to ensnare her again.
When the tale to the ears of the brothers came,
They rent their garments with hearts aflame:

“What ails our father,” they cried, “that he
His loss and advantage should fail to see?
What can come of a foolish boy
But the childish play that is all his joy?
He works on all with deceit and lies,
And raises his value in folly’s eyes.
Our aged father his wiles ensnare,
And life with him will be hard to bear.
He rends the bond of affection apart,
And engrosses the love of our father’s heart.
Not content with the favour his arts have gained,
He wishes that we, pure-hearted, unstained,
Should bend our heads and adore in the dust
The stripling raised high by his father’s trust;
Nay, father and mother, as well as we:
What will the end of this madness be?
We, not this boy, are our father’s friends;
On us, not on him, his welfare depends.
On the hills in the daytime we guard his sheep,
And our nightly watch in his house we keep.
Our arm protects him from foemen’s might,
And we, mid his friends, are his glory and light.
What is there in him but his guile that thus
His head is exalted o’er all of us?
Come, let us counsel together and plot
To drive him away to a distant spot.

Ne'er has he felt for our griefs and pains,
And banishment now the sole cure remains.
Quick to the task we must needs away!
Still it is left us to choose the way.
The thorn that springs fast for mischief should be
Torn up from the root ere it grow to a tree."

The Plot.

WHEN Yúsuf's brothers, with hatred fired,
Against the innocent boy conspired,
Said one : " Our hearts in our sorrow have bled,
And his blood should flow for the blood he has shed.
When the arm of the slayer is lifted to smite,
Can ye save your lives by a timely flight ?
Let him die the death, and our task is sped :
There comes no voice from the lip of the dead."
" Nay," cried a second, " 'tis not for us
To compass the death of the guiltless thus.
Though we check his folly, he may not bleed ;
We hold, remember, the one true creed.
We shall gain our end if we drive him hence
As well as by death-dealing violence.
Let us hide him far from our father's eyes
Where a wild and desolate valley lies ;
In a waste full of pitfalls, from help afar,
Where the ravenous wolves and the foxes are ;

His only water the tears of despair,
And his only bread the sun's scorching glare ;
Where the night around him for shade shall spread,
And thorns be the pillow to rest his head.
He may linger awhile neath the lonely sky,
But soon of himself he will waste and die,
Not a stain of his blood on our swords, and we
From the sword of his guile and deceit shall be free."
"Nay, this, my brother," a third broke in,
"Were the worst of murders and grievous sin.
'Tis better to perish, if die we must,
Not of hunger and thirst, but a dagger's thrust.
This is my counsel, which seems more fit,
To search near and far for a deep dark pit,
And therein, cast down from his place of pride,
In sorrow and darkness the youth to hide.
Some travelling merchants may pass that way,
And halt at the well at the close of day.
They may lower for water a bucket and cord,
And the boy to the air will be thus restored.
Some merchant who looks on the prize will be glad
To take for a son or a slave the lad,
Who, carried away to a distant place,
Will vex us no longer with pain and disgrace."

Soon as he spoke of this living grave,
The brothers approved the counsel he gave.

Unheeding the pit of their murderous thought,
The pit of dishonour they wildly sought.
In their evil purpose they all agreed
The heart of their father to wound and mislead.
Then to their labour they turned, each one ;
And the morrow was fixed for the deed to be done.

Deceit.

BLEST are the souls who are lifted above
 The paltry cares of a selfish love;
 And conquering sense and its earthly ties,
 Are dust in the path of the love they prize;
 Who add no weight to another's care,
 And no weight of reproach from another bear,
 But in this sad world are resigned to their lot,
 Support their brethren and murmur not;
 Who sleep with no malice or fraud in their breast,
 And rise as pure from their welcome rest.

The foes of Yúsuf came glad and gay
 As they thought of the counsel of yesterday,
 With love on their tongue, in their heart fraud and
 lies,

Like wolves that have taken the lamb's disguise,
 In reverent duty their father to see,
 And bowed them down on the bended knee.
 They opened the flattering door of deceit,
 And the words they uttered were soft and sweet.

They spoke awhile of things old and new,
And near and more near to their object drew :
“ Father, we weary of resting at home ;
Through the plain around us we fain would roam.
If thou wilt grant the permission we pray,
Hence will we wander at break of day.
Our brother Yúsuf, the light of thine eyes,
Knows not the region which round us lies.
Wilt thou not send him with us ? Our joy
Will be great to attend on thy darling boy.
He stays in the house through the weary day :
Send him out with us to rove and play.
Through the field and the plain his steps we will guide
Up to the slope and the steep hill’s side.
We will milk the ewes in the grassy field,
And drink with delight the sweet draught they yield.
Through beds of tulips our way will pass,
And our playground will be the carpet of grass.
We will steal the bright crowns of the tulips, and set
Their bloom on his brow for a coronet,
And the boy thus decked we will gently lead
In his graceful gait through the flowery mead.
We will watch the herds of the browsing deer,
And the wolf shall be slain if he venture near.
Perchance the fresh scene will his spirit restore,
And the dulness of home will oppress him no more.

Set a thousand marvels before a child,
Still only by play is his heart beguiled."

The father heard as their suit they pressed,
But turned away and refused their request.
"Why should he follow you?" thus he spake;
"My heart is sad for my darling's sake.

I fear lest, eager and reckless, ye
The perils about him may fail to see.
I fear lest a wolf from the neighbouring waste
Should sharpen his teeth the boy's blood to taste;
Should tear with keen fangs each delicate limb,
And rend my soul as he mangles him."

Thus was their suit by the father denied:
Again to move him their arts they tried:
"Think us not, father, such feeble men
That a single wolf can o'ermatch the ten.
We can seize, as we seize a fox, and slay
A lion making of men his prey."

Thus they insisted. The father heard:
He gave no refusal, he spoke no word.
But his will at last by their prayers was bent,
And woe brought on his house by his silent consent.

The Well.

SHAME, conjuring Heaven, whose fell delight
Is to bury each morn a fair moon from sight!
Who givest for prey to the wolf the gazelle
That browses at ease in life's flowery dell.

When Yúsuf in charge to those wolves was given,
"See, they harry a lamb," cried pitiless Heaven.
While yet in the ken of their father's eyes,
Each strove, as in love, to be nearest the prize.
One raised him high on his back, and round
His waist another his strong arm wound.
But the touch of each hand was more rough and rude,
When they came to the desert of solitude.
From the shoulder of pity the burden they threw,
Where the flint-stones were hard, and the sharp thorns
grew.

Through the pitiless briars he walked unshod,
His rosy feet rent by the spines where he trod,
As he walked barefooted by thistle and thorn,
The silver skin of his hand was torn.

The tender soles of his young feet bled,
And, soft as the rose, like the rose were red.
If he lingered a moment behind the band,
One smote his fair cheek with a ruthless hand.
May the vengeful sword on the fierce hand fall
Which struck the fair face which is loved of all !
If he walked before them they rained their blows
On his neck like a rebel's till red wheals rose.
May each hand be bound to the neck with a chain,
That gave his soft neck that unmerited pain !
If he walked abreast in his trembling fear,
Hard hands on each side of him pulled his ear.
May the savage have naught but his fingers to clasp,
Who could hold that ear in his merciless grasp !
When he clung to one's skirt with a loud lament,
He was flung aside, and his collar rent.
When he lay at their feet in his utter dread,
They laughed as their cruel feet pressed on his head.
When his pale lips uttered a bitter cry,
With jeer and reproach came the harsh reply.
In the depth of despair with wild words he complained,
And the rose of his cheek like the tulip was stained.
Now in the dust, now in blood the boy lay,
And heart-broken cried in his utter dismay :
" Where art thou, my father, where art thou ? Why
Wilt thou heedlessly leave me to suffer and die ?

See the son of her whom thou lovedst so well;
See those who 'gainst wisdom and duty rebel.
What their hearts have devised for thy heart's love, see,
And how they repay obligation to thee.
From the ground of thy soul a young rosebud grew,
And thy tender love fed it and nursed it with dew.
By anguish and thirst it lies withered and dried,
Its life is departing, its bright hues have died.
In a garden kept with each loving device,
Was planted a scion of Paradise.
By the blast of oppression the plant is o'erthrown,
By the thorn and the thistle its height overgrown.
The moon whose fair light for thy guidance was shed,
Which the dark gloom of fate ever failed to o'erspread,
Has suffered such hardship from Heaven on high,
That it prays the new moon its faint light to supply."

Onward thus for a league they went,
He longing for peace, they on slaughter bent.
He was all tenderness, they were stern;
His prayers were warm, their words cold in return.
They came at last to a well where they
Rested awhile from the toil of the way.
Like the grave of a tyrant, deep, dark as night,
It struck with horror the reason's sight.
Like the mouth of a dragon its black jaws gaped—
A terrible portal whence none escaped.

A tyrant's dungeon was not so deep,
Where deadly snakes o'er the prisoner creep.
The depth was too deep for the reach of sense,
And wide was its horror's circumference.
Dire was the centre, the circle despair:
The spring was bitter and poison the air.
For living creature to draw a breath
In that terrible pit were his instant death.
No depths could be found better suited to quell
That rosy-cheeked moon than that horrible well.

Once more he endeavoured to move them; again
Sought to touch their hard hearts in so soothing a strain
That, could it have heard his sweet pleading, a stone
Softer than wax in its fibres had grown.
But the heart of each brother grew harder still,
More firm the resolve of each murderous will.
How shall I tell it? My heart grows weak;
Of the deed they accomplished I scarce can speak.
On that delicate arm for which, soft and fair,
The silk of heaven were too rough to wear,
They firmly fastened a goat-hair cord
Whose every hair seemed a piercing sword.
A woollen rope round his delicate waist
Fine as a hair was securely braced.
His coat from his beautiful shoulders had slipped,
And he stood like a rose when her leaves are stripped.

So they rent the robe of their honour away,
And clothed them with shame till the Judgment Day.
They lowered him down in the deep dark well,
And sunk in the water half-way he fell.
Down into darkness by Fate was hurled
The sun that illumined the whole wide world.

But a stone jutting out from the rocky side,
Above the water a seat supplied.
That humble stone, as high Fate ordained,
A value greater than rubies gained.
The bitter water beneath his feet
At the sight of that ruby, his lip, grew sweet.
The well shone with the splendour his fair cheek shed,
Like the face of the earth with the moon o'erhead.
The fragrance that breathed from his flowing hair
Purged of its poison the deadly air,
And snakes and venomous creatures fled
From his radiant face and the light it spread.

A shirt in an amulet round him slung,
Which had saved his grandsire from the flame, was
hung ;
To Abraham sent by Rizván,¹ when the flame
Like a garden of roses about him became.

¹ Abraham was by the order of Nimrod thrown into the fire. He wore a silken shirt, sent to him from Heaven, and the flame turned into a bed of roses. The shirt was transmitted through Isaac and Jacob to Yúsuf. Rizván is the porter of Paradise.

From the Sidra-tree Gabriel came in haste,
And the heavenly gift from his arm embraced.
The precious shirt from within he drew,
And o'er that pure body the garment threw.
Then spoke the angel: "Lone mourner, see,
The Eternal Himself sends a message to thee:
'The day is nigh when I bring that band,
Who in false-hearted malice thy death have planned,
Before thy presence to bend and bow
With hearts deeper wounded than thine is now.
Then recall to thy brothers their crime and shame,
But keep from their knowledge thy story and name.'"

The words of Gabriel cheered his heart,
And bade his sorrow and pain depart.
In calm content on the jutting stone
He sate like a king on his royal throne,
While the faithful angel, if grief should stir
The heart of the boy, was a minister.

The Caravan.

BLEST was the lot of the caravan
From which, when he thirsted at eve, a man
From that well in the desert his bucket drew,
And brought unburied the moon to view ;
Which three days in the depth had been forced to
dwell

Like the moon of Nakhshab¹ in Nakhshab's well.

On the fourth bright morn when the Yúsuf of day²
Arose from the gulf where entombed he lay,
There came by good fortune a caravan,
Passing to Egypt from Midian.
By the weary length of the way distressed
They halted there and unloaded to rest.
High fate was theirs to have wandered far
And found Yúsuf himself for a guiding star.
The weary merchants halted, and first
To the well they hastened to quench their thirst.

¹ The "Veiled Prophet of Khorosan" is said to have caused a luminous body like the moon to rise out of a well at Nakhshab in Turkestan.

² The sun.

Happy was he who most speedily pressed
To that Water of Life and outstripped the rest,
And, a second Khizar¹ of high renown,
Sent through the darkness his bucket down.
Then Gabriel called to Yúsuf, "Shed
The water of grace on the world," he said.
"Take thy seat in the bucket a brighter sun,
And from west to east in thy swift course run.
Thine horizon shall be the well's circular brim,
And shall ne'er, while thou shinest, be dark or dim.
Send forth a beam from thy face, and through
The whole wide world light shall shine anew."
Then Yúsuf sprang from the stone, and fleet
As water took in the bucket his seat.
A strong man drew it, one skilled to say
What the water he drew from a well should weigh.
"What may there be in the bucket beside
The water that makes it so heavy?" he cried.
When that moon appeared, from his happy soul
Burst a cry of rapture beyond control:
"O joy, that so lovely a moon to illumine
The world should arise from the depth of gloom,
And out of the bitterest spring a stream
Of light and glory should suddenly gleam!"

¹ The prophet Khizar, or Elijah, is the guardian of the Water of Life.

So for him grew a rose in that desolate spot ;
But he to his fellows revealed it not.
To the place where he rested the youth he bare,
And gave him in charge to his people there.
Unworthy his lot is the man, unwise,
Who hides not his treasure from envious eyes.

But the brothers had lingered not far from the well,
And they burned in their hearts to know what befell ;
They saw the merchants arrive and stood
Waiting for news in the neighbourhood.
To Yúsuf they called with a secret cry,
But a hollow echo came back in reply.
To the caravan with quick steps, intent
On claiming the boy as their slave, they went,
And with toil and labour they made their way
Within the ring where the merchants lay.
“ This is our slave,” as they touched him, they cried ;
“ The collar of service his hand has untied.
The bonds of his duty were loosened, and he
From the yoke of his masters has dared to flee.
Though born in our house we will gladly sell
The idle boy who will never do well.
When a slave is negligent, idle, perverse,
Ever growing from bad to worse,
'Tis better to sell him, though small the price,
Than suffer still from his rooted vice.

We will labour no more to improve the wretch,
But sell him at once for the price he may fetch."

He was sold for a trifle to him whose cord
Had brought him up to the light restored.
Málik—so named was the merchant—gave
A few pieces for Yúsuf as household slave.
Then the traders arising their march renewed,
And onward to Egypt their way pursued.

Woe unto those who that treasure sold,
And bartered their souls for some paltry gold !
No life, nor the treasures of Egypt, could buy
One word from his lip or one glance from his eye.
Only Jacob his sire and Zulaikha, the true,
The priceless worth of that treasure knew.
But his worth was unknown to those blinded eyes,
And they took a few pence for the blessed prize.

The King.

THUS Málík gained with no labour the prize
That fell to his fortunate merchandize.
Such joy in the sight of his purchase he found
That scarcely his foot seemed to touch the ground.
With the hope that was in him his heart was gay,
And with double marches he sped on his way.

Ere to the city of Memphis he came,
The story was bruited abroad by fame:
“Málík returns from his journey this morn
With a slave of the race of the Hebrews born:
A moon in the zenith of beauty, above
All others a king in the realm of love.
In the picture-house of the earth the skies
Have not seen his peer with their thousand eyes.”
The King of Egypt the rumour heard,
And the heart within him was strangely stirred:
“Is not Egypt the garden of beauty? Where
Can the eye see roses so bright and fair?
The roses of heaven would droop from their stem
And hide their shamed heads in the dust before them.”

Then he cried in haste to the Grand Vizier :
"Go, meet the merchants whose train is near,
Go forth this moon of rare beauty to see,
And lead him straight to my court with thee."

The noble obeyed ; the merchants he met,
And his eyes on that joy of the soul were set.
At the sight of that beauty his senses fled,
And he fain would bow down in obeisance his head.
But Yúsuf raised him as lowly he bent,
And chid the obeisance he might not prevent :
"Bow down thy head to none living beside
Him who set that head on thy neck," he cried.

He called for Málik and bade him bring
The beautiful slave to the court of the king.
But Málik answered : "We thought not yet
In the monarch's palace our feet to set.
We are weary and worn with the length of the way,
And crave of thy kindness some rest and delay.
With wakeful nights and with hunger distressed
We need three days to recruit and rest.
We will wash off the dust, and refreshed after toil,
Will wait on the king without spot and soil."

The Grand Vizier gave his ready consent,
And again to the king and his duties went.
Of the beauty of Yúsuf he spoke but a word,
Yet the king's jealous heart at the story was stirred.

He gave command, and they picked and chose,
As ye cull from a rosebed each fairest rose,
The most beautiful boys that the land possessed,
In the kingdom of beauty kings over the rest:
With dainty caps bright with glittering gold,
And shawls of brocade round their shoulders to fold:
With a jewelled girdle round each fine waist,
And gay lips sweeter than sugar to taste;
That when Yúsuf's owner should spread the tale
Of his marvellous beauty, and bring him for sale,
They to the market should come and display
Their fair forms and features in rival array.
Then were he the sun, their more beauty would dim
His splendour, and chill the demand for him.

The Bath.

PAST were the promised three days, and on
 The blue heaven of the Nile¹ the sun Yúsuf shone.
 "O world-adorned," said Málik, "awhile
 Light with thy splendour the bank of the Nile.
 Bathe in the stream, and the waters shall flee
 More bright with the dust they shall borrow from
 thee."

That sun of beauty the order obeyed:
 Alone on the bank of the flood he strayed.
 His cap of bright gold he removed from his head,
 And his raven locks to the sun dispread;
 He threw off his robe, and his limbs were bare
 Like the moon that shines through the cloudless air;
 And his neck and shoulders were tinged with a flush
 Like the first faint hue of the morning's blush.
 A bathing-robe round his waist he tied,
 And the cypress of silver hung o'er the stream's side.

¹ The Persian word *nil* signifies both "blue" and "Nile." Jámí frequently plays upon the two meanings of the word.

The voice of the heavens cried: "Blest, O blest
Is the bank of the Nile which his feet have pressed.
Ah, if in the place of the flood I might kiss
Those delicate feet, how supreme were the bliss!
Nay, the sun would bend down from his noonday
height,
And give the glad waters his fountain of light.
Yet he heeds not that fountain of splendour, but laves
The dust from his limbs in the turbid waves."

He entered the river, awhile to shine
In the stream like the sun in the Watery Sign.
He dipped the fair face that was bright as a sun,
As the lotus dips where the sweet waters run.
He struck the waves with each naked limb,
And the waters lived at the touch of him.
He loosened the chains of his hair while the fleet
Stream made a chain for his silver feet,
And to capture the spoil of the river he set
From the moon to the Fish¹ a fine amber-sweet net.
Now a stream from his hand on his beautiful head,
Like the Pleiades decking the moon, was shed.
Now he rubbed the rose where the big drops lay,
Now combed with his fingers the spikenard spray.²

¹ That is, from above the earth to under it, with an allusion also to the fish in the river. The earth is said to rest on Gau or the Bull, and Gau on Máhi or the Fish.

² His hair.

Then pure from all dust of the journey he
Rose up on the bank like a cypress-tree.
Then he put on his raiment: the rose of his skin
Was enhanced by the white of the jessamine.¹
About his body his coat he drew,
Worked with fine fancy of many a hue.
A gold-bright cap on his brow he placed,
And girt with a zone rich with jewels his waist.
Loose hung his ambrosial tresses, and lent
To the breezes of Egypt the breath of their scent.

Again in his litter the youth was placed,
And they drove to the court of the king in haste.
There in front of the palace gate
High on a throne was the king in state,
And the fairest boys of the realm stood near
Expecting when Yúsuf himself should appear,
And a thousand eyes to the litter flew
As near to the throne of the king it drew.
It chanced the clouds in their dense array
Hid the light of the sun that day.
Then Málik gave order to Yúsuf: "Spring
From the litter and come to the throne of the king.
Cast the veil from thy face, for a sun art thou,
And the world shall be gay with the light of thy
brow."

¹ His shirt.

He spoke ; and the lovely boy sprang to the ground,
And shot sunlike rays on the circle around.

" 'Tis the blessed sun," thought the wondering crowd,
" That has come from the screen of his dark blue
cloud."

But they turned their eyes to the sun, and knew
It was not his rays that the splendour threw,
For the dark cloud still o'er the sun was spread,
And the face of Yúsuf the radiance shed.

They clapped their hands, and on every side
Rose up a murmur of voices that cried :

" What, O Heaven, is the brilliant star
Outshining the sun and the moon by far ?"

And the darlings of Egypt looked down disgraced
As they saw their beauty by his effaced.

When the sun shines forth in his splendour, where
Is the faintest star in the Lesser Bear ?

Recognition.

NE'ER had it entered Zulaikha's heart
That one stage kept herself and her darling apart.
But a secret impulse at work in her breast
Filled her with longing and wild unrest.
She strove to calm it, and knew not whence
Came the hidden yearning that moved each sense.
She roamed in the meadow for change and relief,
For the house seemed a dungeon of care and grief.
But still each day was dreary and slow,
And she gnashed her teeth in her depth of woe.
She gathered all luxuries round her in vain,
For each moment that passed but increased her pain.
Her fountain of tears was outwept, and her mind
To change once more and to home inclined.
Again in her litter the lady lay
And hastened back on her homeward way.
On her journey homeward Zulaikha sped,
And her road by the gate of the palace led.

And she asked, as the press of people she viewed,
If Doomsday had gathered the multitude.
One made answer and said to her: "Nay,
A youth from Canaan is here to-day:
No slave is he, but a splendid sun,
In the kingdom of beauty the brightest one."

She raised the curtain, her glances fell
On the form and features she knew so well.
A long sigh burst from her heart as she lay
Back in her litter, her senses astray.
Home with their lady the servants pressed;
In her secret chamber they laid her to rest.
Again the light in her sad eyes burned,
And her senses, lost in her swoon, returned.
"Say, light of my soul," cried the nurse, "say why
From thy troubled breast came that bitter sigh.
What reft thy senses away? What woes
Made thy sweet lips with a cry uncloze?"
"Dear mother," she said, "what reply can I make?
At each word I say must my bosom ache.
Thou sawest that youth in the midst of the press,
While the people were praising his loveliness.
It is he, my beloved, so long adored,
My life and my treasure, my love and my lord,
Whose face in my vision I saw when my soul,
Lured by his splendour, burst forth from control;

For whom body and soul burnt with feverous flame,
For whom tears of blood from these fountains came;
Whose dear love led me to this far land
When I came to this city to yield him my hand.
By him from my home and my friends was I torn,
And left amid strangers unfriended, forlorn.
The pangs thou hast witnessed, the long weary sighs,
The woes that have banished all rest from mine
eyes,

For him all these sorrows were suffered, for him
My heart was heavy, mine eyes were dim.
I know not what grief has assailed me to-day,
But my woes in my breast like a mountain weigh.
What court as a king does my fair moon grace?
What chamber is blest with the light of his face?
Whose eye takes the splendour his glances shed?
And whose house does he turn to a sweet rosebed?
Who wins from those fresh lips a life-giving kiss
And beneath the fair cypress reposes in bliss?
Whose fingers the braid of his tresses entwine?
Who joys in the shade of that palm to recline?
Who would give all her treasure to purchase the prize
And make dust for his feet of the tint of her eyes?"
When the loving nurse saw whence the fierce passion
came,

She wept like a candle that melts with the flame.

She said: "Lamp of beauty, hide, hide this fire;
 Conceal thy longing and sweet desire.
 Long hast thou suffered in patience thy woe:
 This day, too, endeavour like patience to show.
 For hope from thy patience at length may arise,
 And thy sun may burst forth from the cloud where
 he lies."

The Slave-Market.

BLEST is the time, of all hours most sweet,
When two fond lovers, long parted, meet.
When love's touch burns with a steady ray,
And the pangs of longing have passed away.

The beauty of Yúsuf so charmed each eye
That thousands of Memphis came round to buy.
Each one his costliest treasure sold,
And ran to the mart with the ready gold.
They say an old crone for his beauty sighed:
She caught up a handful of yarn and cried:
"No gold or silver to show have I,
But this will admit me with those who would buy."

The crier shouted: "Come, listen to me.
Who would purchase a slave from all blemish free?
The first dawnings of grace on his young cheek shine,
And his lip is a ruby from beauty's mine.
High wisdom's stamp on his brow is impressed,
And the gentle virtues have filled his breast.
He speaks no word but the truth alone,
And fraud and falsehood to him are unknown."

The first who spoke in the dense array
A bag of red gold for the boy would pay :
A bag containing, all duly told,
A thousand coins of the finest gold.
Then others on horseback the market sought,
And a hundred bags, each of like value, brought.
Another outbid them all and would pay
As much fine musk as the boy might weigh.
Another priced him at higher rate
And offered in ruby and pearl his weight.
Thus each tendered his wealth in store,
And the price of Yúsuf rose more and more.

Zulaikha was 'ware of the strife and stir,
And the highest offer was doubled by her.
Their lips were closed, and their faces blank,
As low on the knee of despair they sank.
To the Grand Vizier in her haste she spake :
"The price of the slave to his owner take."
He answered : "The musk and the pearl and gold,
And all the wealth that my treasuries hold,
Not half the price of the boy would be ;
And how can the ransom be paid by me ?"

She had a casket of jewels—nay,
A vault of heaven where the bright stars lay ;
And of all the gems of her treasure few
Were less valued than Egypt's whole revenue.

“Take these jewels,” she cried, “O my soul’s dear gem,
And pay the price of the boy with them.”

With fresh excuses he met her prayer :

“The king will buy him, a slave so fair,
And set over all, at his household’s head,
A youth so true and so gently bred.”

“Hasten,” said she, “to the king, and all
Thy faithful care to his mind recall.

Say, ‘Bar to my joy have I only one,
That mine eyes may look on no darling son.¹
Enhance my state by the boon I crave,
And leave me free to command the slave.’”

Zulaikha spoke, and her lord obeyed :
Before the king his request he laid.
Just was the plea, and the monarch bent
His ear to listen, and gave assent.
He gave him permission the slave to buy
And look on the boy with a father’s eye.

He brought the youth to his home ; and she,
Zulaikha, at length from her grief was free.
Thus in a rapture the lady cried
As her eyes from the pearls of her joy she dried :
“Can it be real, this bliss supreme ?
Have I found my love, or is all a dream ?

¹ Zulaikha’s nominal husband belonged to “that unhappy class which a practice of immemorial antiquity in the East excluded from the pleasures of love and from the hope of posterity.”

Ne'er could I hope in the gloom of night
To look on the dawn of a day so white.
The moon of triumph her splendour shows :
Night has no sorrow and day no woes.
My gentle friend will my secrets share—
Thanks be to Heaven who has heard my prayer.
Who is blest like me in this world of grief
When verdure revisits the faded leaf?
I gasped for water, but none was nigh :
The sun was fierce and the sand was dry.
From the cloud of grace came the gentle rain
And bore the poor fish to her native main.
I wandered lost in the gloom of night,
My soul on my lips for toil and affright.
A fair moon rose in the east and led
My faint steps home with the light it shed.
I lay on my bed, I was tortured with pain,
With the lancet of Death in my heart's vital vein,
When suddenly Khizar appeared in the room,
And with Water of Life brought me back from the tomb.
Now thanks be to Heaven who has sent me my friend,
And brought the long woes of my life to an end.
A thousand lives be that noble heart's prize
Who brought to the market such merchandize.
If my jewels are gone, and I gain a rich mine
Of jewels instead, shall I fondly repine !

What are jewels and gems when compared with a
soul ?

He is welcome, whate'er they may be, to the whole.

I recover my soul, and a few stones are lost :

Whoe'er bought such a prize at so paltry a cost ?

What does he gain by his traffic who sells

The blessed Ísa¹ for coral and shells ?²

My coral and shells I have bartered away :

But Ísa the blessed is mine to-day."

She sifted these thoughts in the sieve of her soul,

And let pearls of tears from her glad eyes roll.

Now she thought of Yúsuf but spoke no word,

Though her heart with the joy of his presence stirred.

Again she recounted the woes that were past,

And her soul rejoiced : he had come at last.

¹ Jesus.

² Things of little worth.

Bázigha.

NOT from sight only, but oft from the tongue
The gracious glory of love has sprung.
Through the ear an entrance will beauty find,
To steal sense from the heart and repose from the
mind.

A whisper of beauty has power to raise
The soft flame nursed by a skilful praise.
Love secretly reigns in the bosom, and yet
The eyes of the lovers may never have met.

In Egypt a maiden was born to grace
The Adites' ¹ ancient and princely race.
The land was sweet with the smile of the girl,
And her onyx casket ² was fairer than pearl.
Her sugar lips had a laugh to enchain
The knotty heart of the sugar-cane.
Her hand by the lords of the realm was sought,
But to none of its darlings she gave a thought.

¹ Descendants of a famous King, 'Ad, of Arabia Felix.

² Her mouth.

On the best of the nobles her pride looked down,
For in heaven itself was the maiden's crown,
From her height of glory, and riches, and rank,
To earthly suitor her eye ne'er sank.
But soon as the beauty of Yúsuf she learned,
The sun of her love to that fair moon turned.
Wider and wider the rumour flew,
And her love fresh might from each whisper drew.
She heard of his beauty, and longed to see ;
For hearing the root is, and seeing the tree.
The price of the marvellous boy she inquired,
And strove to obtain what her heart desired.
A thousand camels she bade them lade,
With gold, and jewels, and musk, and brocade,
And precious things from her stores she brought
That the price might be worthy the prize she sought.
The best of her treasure she would not spare,
Till casket and chamber were empty and bare.
Thus furnished, the way to Memphis she led,
And swiftly the news of her coming was spread.

Soon as the place where he dwelt she knew,
With an eager heart to the spot she flew.
Like a soul with no mixture of clay she beheld
His beauty, which thought never paralleled.
Ne'er had she seen such a marvel, ne'er
Dreamed of a form so divinely fair.

As she looked on his splendour she swooned and lay
In a rapturous trance with her senses astray.
She woke to consciousness slowly, and passed
Out of the swoon that had held her fast.
Her lips she opened; she fain would speak,
From that storehouse of riches rare pearls to seek.¹
“O youth,” she cried, “from all evil free,
Who made thy beauty so fair to see?
By whom was the sun’s own splendour lent,
And the moon, for thy forehead’s ornament?
Say in what garden that cypress grew,
And what artist hand the fair picture drew?
Whose compasses marked thy brow’s delicate line?
Who curled in bright clusters those locks of thine?
Who set the young flower in the garden? Who
Fed the tender plant with the splendour of dew?
Where could a master be found to teach
Thy cypress its motion, thy ruby its speech?
Thy locks’ fair letters whose pen could trace?
Who read the book of thy moon-bright face?
Who bade thee from nothingness wake and arise?
And opened to light those narcissus-like eyes;
And that onyx lock in that pearl-casket laid,
Whence the soul of the hearer is strengthened and
stayed?

¹ That is, to obtain an answer from Yúsuf.

Who hollowed the well in thy soft round chin,
And poured the sweet Water of Life therein?
Who set the dark mole on thy cheek, and spread
The raven's wing o'er the roses' bed?"

He heard her speech; and from wisdom's spring
Flowed forth the reply to her questioning:

"I am the work of that Maker," said he,
"From whose ocean one drop is enough for me.
Heaven is but a dot which His pen has made,
And the earth but a bud in His garden displayed.
The sun is a spark of His wisdom's light,
And a bubble the world of the sea of His might.
From atoms He made us, as mirrors to shine
With the borrowed light of His face divine.
Screened by dark curtains from mortal eye,
On His pure perfection no stain may lie.
Whatever fair to thy sight appears
Is the light of His face when thy vision clears.
Dost thou see the reflection? Then fly to Him
To whom faint is that shadow and cold and dim.
Dost thou shun the light's Author? No, God forbid!
Or dark were thy lot when that reflex is hid.
It will last but a moment—this borrowed ray—
As the bloom of the rose and her scent decay.
Dost thou seek the eternal, the firm, the true?
Then fix on Him ever thy steadfast view.

'Tis this that pierces our hearts with pain,
That fair things are with us, ah! not to remain."

The maiden listened as Yúsuf replied:
She folded love's carpet and laid it aside.
"I heard thy praises," 'twas thus she spoke,
"And the flame of love in my heart awoke.
Hither I journeyed thy face to see,
And my head was my foot in the search for thee.
I came, I found thee: I swooned away,
And my life at thy feet I was fain to lay.
But wisdom's pearls thou hast deigned to string,
And pointed the way to the pure light's spring.
Thou hast cut the fine hair with the word of truth,
And repelled the love of mine eager youth.
Thou hast lifted the veil of my hope and shown
The way to that Sun which I never had known.
This truth at last to my heart is plain,
That my love for thee like a dream was vain.
Mine eyes have been touched by the truth's pure ray,
And the dream of folly has passed away.
Mine eyes thou hast opened—God bless thee for it!—
And my heart to the Soul of the soul thou hast knit.
From a fond strange love thou hast turned my feet
The Lord of all creatures to know and meet,
If I bore a tongue in each single hair,
Each and all should thy praise declare.

But the voice of thanksgiving I scarce can raise
To string together the pearls of thy praise."

Her speech was ended; with one adieu,
Set free from her fancy, the maid withdrew.
She hastened away from his presence, and there
On the bank of the Nile built a house of prayer.
From love of the world and its treasures freed,
Her door she opened to all in need;
And they on the stores of her bounty fed
Till she scarce had enough for her evening bread.
For the crown that had glittered with precious
stone,

A tattered veil o'er her head was thrown;
For the band of gold that had bound her brow,
A woollen fillet sufficed her now.
Her silks and satin she used no more,
But a robe of felt, like a glass,¹ she wore,
And instead of the gems of her bracelet, she
Counted the beads of her rosary.
From the world and its pleasures she turned away
To her lowly cottage to muse and pray.
The ashes she brought from the bath-stove spread
In the place of ermine supplied her bed.
With her head on a cold rough stone she slept,
And the people looked on her woes and wept.

¹ Covered, for protection, with thick felt.

Thus in obedience and meek content
In the house of worship her days she spent,
And, when the hour of her death was nigh,
Resigned her spirit as heroes die.

Think not the meed she had earned was denied :
The bright cheek of her loved one she saw ere she
died.

Oh, learn from this maiden a hero's part :
Let her mourning teach thee to mourn, my heart.
If thou hast not her sorrow, go mourn thy lot,
And grieve for thyself if grief trouble thee not.
In long devotion to forms that cheat
Thou hast suffered the days of thy life to fleet.
But outward forms are still passing away,
Changing their fashion from day to day.
Tread not ever on stones that are rough to thy feet,
Nor shift from one branch to another thy seat.
Seek high o'er the sphere of this world thy rest :
In the world of reality make thee a nest.
If Truth be thine object, form-worshippers shun ;
For form is manifold, Truth¹ is one.
In number trouble and error lie :
To Unity then for sure refuge fly.
If the might of the foeman oppress thee sore,
Fly to the fortress and fear no more.

¹ The One Absolute, besides whom all is merely phenomenal.

Love's Service.

WHEN the prize to the net of Zulaikha came,
Heaven struck its coin in her happy name.
The care of Yúsuf was now her task,
And no higher joy would the lady ask.
Silk embroidered with gold and brocade
To suit his stature her care arrayed.
Gold-wrought coronets, studded zones
Bright with the lustre of precious stones ;
For each day of the year a new dress to wear
She saw provided, and ceased from her care.
When the breath of morning was fresh with dew,
With a bright fresh robe to his side she flew.
When the Lord of the East with red gold was crowned,
With a new gold circlet his brow she bound.
Each day that the cypress upreared his pride,
In varied fashion his zone she tied.
Changed each morning that sunlight shone
Stealing the heart that it looked upon.
Never two days might the same crown press
The head of that cypress of loveliness.

Never, though sweet as the sugar-cane,
Might he wear the same girdle like it again.
With a thousand kisses she cried, as she set
On his temples a glittering coronet :
“ May the dust of thy feet be to me for a crown,
For a ladder to climb the tall height of renown ! ”
When over his shoulders his robe she drew,
She communed thus with the vest anew :
“ Oh that this body of mine might be,
To cling to his body, one thread of thee ! ”
The shawl she folded about his breast
In amorous words like these was addressed :
“ Ah, how I long for that cypress-tree,
To be folded close to his heart like thee ! ”
When round his waist she adjusted the zone,
In these wild words was her passion shown :
“ Ah, that mine arms were that girdle to fold
The waist of my love in their clinging hold ! ”
When she combed the locks of his curling hair,
She found a balm for her sorrow there.
But ah, from its amber she wove and set,
To tangle her soul in its meshes, a net.
For breakfast and supper he might not leave
The lady's chamber at morn and eve,
Ever supplied by her tender care
With varied dishes of daintiest fare.

Sweet sugar-candy his lips supplied,
And his teeth were the kernels that almonds
hide.

The fairest fruit that the summer brings in
Was that silver apple, his rounded chin.
Now, like her heart as it burnt in the flame,
She gave him the breast of some wingèd game.
Now soft fruits which her care had dried,
Sweet as her lips were, her hand supplied.
She made him sherbet with sugar sweet;
But a flush came o'er her and drops of heat.
Whate'er he might fancy, as swift as the thought
Of her own fond bosom, Zulaikha brought.
When the day was done and he fain would close
His weary eyelids in soft repose,
A coverlet dainty and gay was spread
O'er the silk and brocade of his sumptuous bed.
Covered with roses the young rose-spray
Pillowed on tulip and jessamine lay.
Then many a story with magic spell,
To clear the dust from his soul, would she tell.
When slumber a veil o'er his heavy eyes drew
She watched in her fever the whole night through,
Feeding the while on his beauty's lawn
Her pair of wild roes ¹ till the light of dawn.

¹ Her eyes.

O'er his eyes like the sleeping narcissus she bent
And inhaled with rapture the young bud's scent.
Now on a tulip her fingers would close,
Now from the rose-bed she gathered a rose.
Then she would look on his hair and say :
" O hair beloved of grace's rose-spray,
Tears of blood from my sad eyes well
Because thou, a Dev, with a Peri wilt dwell !"¹

Thus in her passion she made lament,
Till the long night, black as her hair, was spent.
Ever busied in cares like these,
Her day and night passed without rest or ease.
Her constant thought to his wants she gave,
And, queen of the house, was his humble slave.

Ah ! fond and weak is a lover, fain
To toil that the loved one be spared a pain.
If dust or a thorn in his love's path lie,
He would sweep it away with the lash of his eye,
And will wait with his soul in that eye for her
To bend a kind look on her worshipper.

¹ Hair black as a Dev, with a face fair as a Peri's.

Sympathy.

THUS will the singer who sings the song
The pleasant course of his tale prolong.
Pain and hunger and wild unrest
Tortured the heart in Zulaikha's breast.
Patience fled and left woe behind,
Soul and body no rest could find.
On no household care could she fix her thought,
And without the house she was pleased with
naught.
Out and in ever she went and came,
Her eyes full of water, her heart aflame.
The nurse addressed her: "Belovèd moon,
Eclipsing the light of the sun at noon,
From the malice of Fate may thy life be free,
And never may Heaven be wroth with thee.
What has come o'er thee, I fain would know,
That thy soul is drowned in a sea of woe.
Thou art like a leaf, not a moment still,
Which the west wind blows wheresoever it will.

On its back, on its face, for a moment it lies,
And this way and that way it restlessly flies.
Ever delighting in change of place,
Backward and forward it loves to race.
Tell me what troubles thy rest, and who
Has brought a grief to thy soul anew."
"I know not," she answered; "I cannot say
Why my thoughts are troubled, my senses astray.
I know that I suffer, but know not why
These sorrows sore on my spirit lie.
Some hidden grief on my bosom preys,
And darkens with anguish the light of my days.
I am like the soil of the earth: naught breaks
The calm of its rest till the whirlwind wakes.
It is tossed about by the blast, but knows
Naught of the source whence the storm arose."

Since Yúsuf came to Zulaikha, they
Were ever together by night and day.
One eve he opened his lips to disclose
His mournful story of many woes.
He told the tale as it all befell,
And spoke of his prison, that noisome well.
Soon as the words from his lips she heard,
The answering chords of remembrance stirred.
That selfsame day she remembered, she felt
The heart in her bosom with anguish melt,

And when the past months had been reckoned, she knew
That the swift surmise of her soul was true.

Yes, the heart that is watchful will never deny
That from soul to soul a swift message may fly ;
And chief from the soul of the lover, who
To his own fond darling is faithful and true,
There lies a clear path, and where'er he may be,
The steps of his loved one he still may see.
Still to his eye and his heart he will feel
A ray from the light of her beauty steal.
If a thorn wound the foot of his darling, the heart
Of the faithful lover will feel the smart.
If the zephyr play with her tangled hair,
There is doubt in his bosom and anxious care.
If a grain of dust on her dear cheek rest,
His back is bent with its weight oppressed.
I have heard the story how Laila, fain
With the point of a lancet to open a vein,
Touched with the steel her soft skin, and blood
Burst from the hand of Majím in a flood.

Come, Jámí, from dreams of thyself forbear ;
Take for thy being no thought or care.
God is the giver of power and sense :
If fame be thine, thou hast gained it thence.
Be pure from self-love and its hate and fear,
And let thy soul's mirror be bright and clear.

Then the light of the beauty we may not see,
As it gleamed on Músa¹ will gleam on thee.
When thy soul is illumed with this light from above,
Thou wilt know the lore of eternal love.

¹ Moses.

The Shepherd.

BLEST is the lover allowed by Fate
About his beloved to serve and wait.
All thought of himself to the wind is thrown,
And his care and time are for her alone.
Would she have his life? At her feet it lies:
He kisses the ground that she treads, and dies.
Would she take his heart? Straight that heart is filled
With love's warm blood from his eyes distilled.
His head is a foot when she bids him rise,
And he deems her service a lordly prize.

Oft has a shepherd been known to claim,
As the guard of religion, a prophet's name;
And stronger and stronger in Yúsuf's heart
Grew his rooted love for the shepherd's part.
Soon as the wish of the boy she knew,
The rein, as he guided, Zulaikha drew.
She ordered those skilled in the art to bring
For the use of her darling a dainty sling,
With gold like the sunlight, woven with care,
And bright as the threads of his fragrant hair.

Ah, how she longed in her heart that she
Herself one thread of the sling might be !
“ Mine arm round his body I may not twine,
But a touch of his hand would be surely mine.
But ah, can I wish with one single hair
To add to the weight which that hand must bear ? ”
Rarest gems in the sling she set,
And pearls such as made her own eyes so wet :
And the precious rubies a king would prize
Were as worthless stones in the lady’s eyes.
Then she bade the shepherds who fed their sheep
On the grassy plain and the mountain-steep
Choose from their flocks, like the Ram¹ that feeds
In the heavens, the best of the finest breeds—
Lambs fed on spikenard, like roes of Cathay,
Whom the wolf had ne’er looked on to make his
prey.
And Yúsuf departed to shepherd these,
Like the spring sun entering Aries.
Like a young musk-deer alone, astray,
To the lambs in the valley he bent his way.
Zulaikha sent with her shepherd boy,
Like his faithful dog, her soul, patience and joy,
And careful guardians about him, all
Charged to watch o’er him lest harm befall.

¹ The zodiacal sign Aries.

Thus, while he pleased, passed his days, and still
He knew no guide but his own free will.
He might feed his flock, if he chose, on the plain ;
If he would, in the realm of a heart might reign.
Yet still in his inmost nature he stood
Aloof both from kingship and shepherdhood.¹

¹ That is, his nature was unchanged by external circumstances.

Love Repelled.

HE who gives his heart to a lovely form
 May look for no rest but a life of storm.
 If the gold of union be still his quest,
 With a fond vain dream love deludes his breast.
 As the passionate blood from his heart distils,
 He would see the form that his fancy fills.
 When his tearful eyes have obtained the grace,
 He longs for a kiss and a close embrace.
 If round his darling his arm he throws,
 The thoughts of parting renew his woes.
 Love may not lead us to perfect bliss :
 Life is not sweeter for love like this.
 From the secret grief of the soul it springs,
 And self-earned death is the end it brings.
 How should his days in sweet calm pass by
 Who must drink the blood of his heart or die ?

When on Yúsuf, seen in her vision, as yet
 No waking eye had Zulaikha set,
 One wish alone in her heart might dwell,—
 To look on the form which she loved so well.

When the sight of her darling had blessed her eyes,
Her bosom yearned for a sweeter prize,
And her loving arms round that form to wind
Was the longing thought of her heart and mind,
With a kiss on his ruby-red lips impressed,
By his arm encircled, to take her rest.
When a youth in the spring through a garden
goes,

His heart marked like a tulip, for love of the rose,
First on its petals he looks with delight,
And then plucks the fair flower that has charmed his
sight.

With winning art would Zulaikha woo ;
But Yúsuf far from her gaze withdrew.
Tears of hot blood would Zulaikha shed ;
But her tears were idle, for Yúsuf fled.
Zulaikha's soul with deep wounds was scarred ;
But the heart of Yúsuf was cold and hard.
Still on his cheek would Zulaikha gaze ;
But Yúsuf never his eye would raise.
For a glance from her darling Zulaikha burned ;
But Yúsuf's look from her look was turned.
His eye he kept lest his heart might err,
And no fond glance would he bend on her.

What rest has the lover who pines alone,
If his darling's eye may not meet his own ?

He sheds his tears, and he heaves his sighs,
Hoping to gaze on his loved one's eyes.
If still those eyes to his love she close,
With the blood of his heart he must weep his woes.

When this heavy load on her bosom lay
Zulaikha wasted from day to day.
In the chilling autumn of pain and grief
The tulip banished the pink rose-leaf.
Under the weight of her sorrow she sank,
And the stately young cypress-tree withered and
shrank.

Gone was the splendour her lips had shed,
And the light that had shone from her cheek was
dead.

Faint and weary she hardly through
Her long sweet tresses her fingers drew.
Scarce would she look at her mirror; she
Kept her eyes bent down with her head on her knee.
No borrowed bloom on her cheek was spread,
For the blood that she wept from her heart was red.
The world about her was black, and why
Should she darken her orbs with the jetty dye?
If under those lids the dark tint had lain,
The tears that she shed would have washed them again.
When Zulaikha's heart with her wound was torn
She rebuked her spirit with queenly scorn:

“Shame on thee! Disgrace on thy name thou hast
brought

By love of the slave whom thy gold has bought.

A lady thou on a princely throne,

Wilt thou stoop to make love to a slave of thine own?

The chains of thy love on a monarch fling:

A prince's daughter should love a king.

But of all that is strange 'tis most strange that he

Should shrink from love offered by one like thee.

If the dames of Memphis but knew thy shame,

Where were the end of their scorn and blame?”

Thus spoke Zulaikha; but still she felt
That he alone in her fond heart dwelt.

Him she could not banish, but strove awhile

To charm her pain with this simple guile.

When the loved one possesses the lover's soul,
Can he tear himself free from her sweet control?

You may rend his heart from his body, yet

His faith to his love he will never forget.

The words of the love-stricken bard are true:

“Musk will keep its scent and the rose its hue.

And how may the lover have power to part

From the soul of his soul and the heart of his heart?”

Questionings.

THE nurse beheld her thus ill at ease,
And questioned her lady in words like these :
“ Sweet, to whose eye all its light mine eye owes,
The flush of whose cheek makes my heart like the
 rose,

I see thee bowed down with a burthen of care,
And I know not the source of thy secret despair.
Thou art ever near to thy heart’s desire ;
Then why art thou troubled, thy bosom on fire ?
Not a word to blame thine unrest could I say
In the time when thy darling was far away.
Wilt thou trouble thy heart in a time like this,
And consume thy sad soul when assured of thy
 bliss ?

Where is the lover, supremely blest,
Whom his darling serves when he gives behest ?
And happy in truth is the star that gave
The lord of thy bosom to thee for a slave.
A moon most worthy of kingly sway—
What wouldst thou more ?—Must thy will obey.

Go, look on his face and be happy and free
From all earthly sorrows that trouble thee.
Gaze on the cypress and watch in thy joy
The graceful step of the blooming boy.
Look on his lip, take thy solace with him,
And the cup of delight shall be full to the brim."

Zulaikha heard the advice of the dame,
And blood from her heart in her hot tears came,
Poured out like rain from the cloud of her eye,
As thus her sad story she told in reply :
"Is the secret that weighs on this breast, mine own
Dear mother, still to thy heart unknown ?
Hast thou not seen what my life has to bear
From that soul of the world—all my grief and
despair ?

He waits and serves in my presence, but still
He is deaf to each hint of his lady's will.
He is ever near me and comes at my call,
But never on me will his glances fall.
Well may the thirsty complain in their woe
With parched lips on the bank where the sweet waters
flow.

When the torch of my beauty to lure him burns,
His heedless eye on his foot he turns.
Not for this can I blame him : I fain would confess
That his foot shames my cheek in its loveliness.

When on him lights mine eye which beholds the
world,

His brow is contracted, his lip is curled.

Yet his frown has a charm: can I blame him for
this,

When of all that he does, naught is e'er done amiss?

There are knots in my heart from the arch of his
brow,

And my life is all knot and perplexity now,

While the knots that have bound all my acts in their
ties

Restrain me from resting mine eyes on his eyes.

When to me he closes his mouth's sweet bud,

What is my gain, but to drink my heart's blood?

My mouth may water for that red rose,

But mine eye has no water—'tis blood that flows.

That tender sapling for which I pine—

When will it in mercy to me incline?

I would pluck the fair fruit, and a cloud I see

Of woes if I leave the sweet fruit on the tree.

Would I joy in the dimple of that soft chin?

'Tis a well of woe that he leaves me in.

I envy the sleeve of my darling's dress,

For still on that arm it may tenderly press.

The bliss of his skirt is my torture: how sweet

To kiss the dust pressed by his delicate feet!"

Weeping the nurse gave her answer: "How
Can one live in the sorrow that weighs on thee now?
Better is absence from all that is dear
Than in sorrow and bitterness thus to be near.
One deep pang at parting the bosom may rend,
But meetings like these must be woe without end."

The Messenger.

IN course of long sorrow Zulaikha knew
That her nurse was faithful and helpful and true.
"Thou hast served me often," 'twas thus she prayed;
"Help me again, for I need thine aid.
To him as my messenger take thy way,
Be thou mine eloquent tongue, and say:
'Delicate plant, ever tended with care,
Lovely with blossom but wayward as fair;
In the garden of beauty no cypress-tree
Lifts up its head to compare with thee.
Moulded from spirit and soul was the clay
Wherein was planted thy Sidra-spray.
When the green leaves came on each growing bough,
They said: "The fairest of trees art thou."
Since the bride of Time was a mother, she
Was never made glad by a child like thee.
The eye of Adam was bright at thy birth,
And the bloom of thy cheek made a rosebed of earth.
For none of the children of men is so fair;
No Peri has beauty with thine to compare.

If thy loveliness shamed not the Peris, why
Should they hide in a corner when thou art nigh ?
Angels enthroned in the heavenly height
Bend their heads to the ground when thy face is in
sight.

If, by favour of Heaven, so high is thy place,
Have mercy and show thy poor captive grace.
They say that Zulaikha is witchingly fair,
But ah, she has fallen a prey to thy snare.
She has carried from childhood the wound in her breast
Which for many long days has deprived her of rest.
In three nightly visions thy face was shown,
And no peace in her heart from that time has she
known.

Now chained like the waves of the wind-rippled sea,
Now roaming ere morn like the zephyr is she.
She is worn by her sorrow as thin as a hair,
And her longing for thee is her only care.
All the gold of her life for thy sake has she spent ;
Have pity at last : it is sweet to relent.
Pure and fresh is the Water of Life on thy lip :
What harm if a drop from the fountain she sip ?
With full clusters laden, what harm to allow
One taste of the fruit that hangs ripe on the bough ?
On thy ruby lip let her feed her fill,
And perhaps the wild storm of her breast will be still.

Let her pluck the dates from that palm-tree's height,
Or lay down her head where thy foot may light.
What wilt thou lose of thy rank, my king,
If thine eye one glance on thy servant fling?
In all the pride of her station, she
The least of thy handmaids would gladly be.'"

He heard the speech. In reply to the dame
From his ruby lips opened this answer came:
"Skilled in the secrets thou knowest so well,
Cheat not my soul with thy ravishing spell.
The slave of Zulaikha and bought with her gold,
My debt for her kindness can never be told.
To this stately mansion she raised my clay,
And nurtured my soul and my life each day.
If I counted her favours my whole life through,
I never could pay her the thanks that are due.
On the line of her pleasure my head I lay,
And I wait ever ready to serve and obey.
But warn her never to hope that I
My God's commandment will break and defy.
Ne'er let her tempt me in hope to win
The soul which I strive to keep pure to sin.
I am called his son by the Grand Vizier;
He counts me true and my love sincere.
Shall I, the young bird whom his care has bred,
Bring shame on the house where I long have fed?"

God in various natures has sown the seeds
Of divers wishes and thoughts and deeds.
The pure in nature will fear disgrace ;
But base are his actions whose birth is base.
Can a dog be born of a woman ? Where
Does barley wheat or wheat barley bear ?
In my bosom the secrets of Jacob dwell,
And my heart keeps the wisdom of Gabriel.
Am I worthy of prophethood ? Well I know
To holy Isaac that hope I owe.
A rose am I and a secret I hold ;
In Abraham's garden my petals unfold.
May sin never drive me—forbid it, God !—
Aside from the path which my fathers trod.
Bid Zulaikha spurn the wild thought, and free
Her own kind heart from the sin, and me.
My trust in the God whom I serve is sure
To keep my life undefiled and pure.”

Excuses.

THE answer was brought to Zulaikha ; despair
 Made her senses as wild as her own wild hair.
 From her eye's black almond there came a flood
 Of thick tears mixed with her own heart's blood.
 She reared up her stately cypress, and flew
 Till its shade o'er the head of her darling she threw.
 "My head," she cried, "at thy feet shall be,
 But ne'er shall my breast from thy love be free.
 My love of thee throbs in each hair of my head :
 Self-thought and self-feeling are vanished and dead.
 That vision of thee is my soul, and the snare
 Of thy love is the collar which slave-like I wear.
 Have I a soul ? 'Tis but longing for thee ;
 A body ? Its spirit is hasting to flee.
 But how of the state of my heart shall I speak ?
 'Tis one drop of the torrent that pours down my cheek.
 In the whelming sea of thy love I drown ;
 Its waters rush o'er me and weigh me down.
 When the leech with his lancet would ease my pain,
 Love of thee, and not blood, gushes forth from the vein."

Then Yúsuf wept at her words. "Ah, why
Those tears?" said Zulaikha, and heaved a sigh.
"Thou art mine own very eye, and while
Tears of sorrow are dewing it how can I smile?
For each big drop from thine eye that flows,
A flame of fire in my bosom glows.
A miracle this of thy beauty, that turns
Water itself into flame that burns."

He saw her anguish, he heard her sighs,
And the tears flowed down from his lips and eyes:
"My heart is broken," he said, "when I see
How woe ever waits upon love of me.
My aunt's foolish love was my earliest grief,
For it made me appear to the world as a thief.
Loved by my father I still was unblest,
For envy grew fast in each brother's breast.
From his sight they banished his favoured child,
And to Egypt's land have I come exiled.
And now must the heart in my bosom bleed
At thought of the woe which thy love may breed.
The Lord of lovers is jealous: He
Will brook in His kingship no rivalry.
He will have no partner to share His throne,
But from first to last He will reign alone.
Scarce may a cypress its proud top show
Ere like a long shadow He lays it low.

Scarce can the moon her full light display
Ere scathed by His anger it fades away.
Soon as the sun in the zenith shines
The golden light to the west declines."

Zulaikha answered : " My lamp and eye,
I need no moonlight when thou art nigh.
If I may not be dear in thy sight, to be
The least of thy slaves were enough for me.
But canst thou not treat her in gentler mood,
And free her from sorrows of servitude ?
No outward sign will thy handmaid show,
But her heart will long and her bosom glow.
Why dost thou deem me a foe ? Thou art
Dearer to me than mine own dear heart.
And where is the fool who would add a care
To double the load which his heart must bear ?
What dost thou fear from my hate ? My heart
By the sword of thy love has been cleft apart.
Ah, kiss me ; the touch of thy lips will restore
The rest of my soul that I sorrow no more."
" Nay, my sweet mistress," thus Yúsuf replied :
" In duty's bonds I am chained and tied.
From the path of service I may not stray :
There thou commandest and I obey.
More than such duty forbear to claim ;
Make not thy love my dishonour and shame.

Assign me some labour that far from thy side
My days still for thee may be occupied.
Against thy light orders I will not rebel,
But remember thy bounties and serve thee well.
By faithful service a slave like me
Made glad by kindness at length is free.
True service rejoices a master; but still
A slave he continues who serves him ill.”
“Rare jewel,” she answered, “compared with thee
The meanest slave’s rank were too high for me.
For each slight task, when my voice is heard,
A hundred servants obey my word.
Their ready service can I refuse,
And thee for the task or the message choose?
The eye is counted of higher worth
Than the foot which is fashioned to tread the earth.
Thorns in the path of thy foot may lie,
But lay not upon them thy precious eye.”

Again said Yúsuf: “Dear lady, round
Whose heart the bands of my love are bound,
If thy love like the light of the morn be true,
Only my will must thou seek to do.
My wish is only to serve thee; thou—
Or thou art no friend—must the wish allow.
To please the heart that he loves, a friend
Regards as his being’s true aim and end.

'Neath the foot of friendship his will he sets,
And self in the love of his friend forgets."

He spake in the hope that a task might bar
All converse with her and keep him afar.
He knew that her presence was trouble and fear:
In distance was safety, and woe to be near.
In fire and tempest the wool that flies
When it may not contend with the flame is wise.

The Garden.

THE singer continues the story told
By saintly lips in the days of old.
What time Zulaikha enamoured hung
On the sugared accents of Yúsuf's tongue,
The loveliest garden was hers ; the breast
Of jealous Iram its charms confessed.
Fountains watered the wall-girt ground,
And dark red roses shed perfume round.
The boughs of the trees in that pleasant place
Were twined like lovers in fond embrace.
The plane-tree's foot touched the cypress's skirt,
Whose neck with its amulet arms was girt.
The rose lay couched on her leafy bed,
And the pine reared a tent for her languid head.
A plain prepared for the orange tree lay,
Ready with ball and with stick for play.
In that garden of bliss where no ill might befall
It might win from all comers the victor's ball.
The date-palm reared her slim height and lent
The garden her heightening ornament :

Each golden cluster a store most sweet
Which the broken-hearted for balm might eat.
The milk from the ripe figs was ready to burst
If the garden's young nurslings, the birds, were athirst;
And the bill of each bird was with rich pearls filled
As he sipped the sweet drops which the fruit distilled.
When the light of the noonday sun was shed
Through the latticed green of the boughs outspread,
The earth beneath them was light and dusk
With a mingled treasure of gold and musk.
The flickering gleams o'er the shadows played
Like bells for the drums of the roses swayed.
The wakeful nightingale saw them swing,
And emulous lifted his voice to sing.
In wind and shadow the bright fish gleamed
Where rivulets under the willows streamed.
The shade of each bough like a besom lay
To sweep the dry leaves of the garden away.
The ground was a slate with its green lines set
In the silver frame of a rivulet:
A slate, to which even the wisest, to learn
The signs of our Lord the Creator, might turn.
The rose, the emblem of beauty, glowed,
Or like a sad lover her pale cheek showed.
The zephyr loosened the spikenard's braid,
And, curling her leaves, with the violet played.

Tulip, jasmine, and basil embraced in their mirth,
And like delicate silk was the verdure of earth.
In the garden of bliss were two fountains, graced
With the fairest marble-like crystal, placed.
Each like the other in form and size,
They were near together like beautiful eyes.
Smooth was the marble; its polished face
Showed of the chisel and saw no trace.
Ne'er could the eye of the keenest see
Where the joint of the separate slabs might be.
None who saw them forbore the thought
That of one solid piece the whole work was wrought.

When Zulaikha went to her garden to find
Rest and delight for her troubled mind,
One brimming fountain—for so she willed—
With milk, and the other with honey they filled;
And the maidens who followed that bright moon fed
On milk or honey as fancy led.

And between them both was a throne, a seat
For a darling of Heaven like Yúsuf meet.

Hither she sent him. Her heart was rent,
But she forced her will to a slow consent.
The nightingale sang to the morning air:
“A fair gardener comes to a garden fair.
The garden is heaven itself, 'tis well
That the warder of Paradise here should dwell.”

A hundred maidens all pure within,
Stood round him with bosoms of jessamine,
Planted like cypresses tall and still,
Eager to serve ere he spoke his will.
“Sweet,” said Zulaikha, “all these are thine;
Let thy youthful heart to their love incline.
If for thy love I must sigh in vain—
A thought that poisons my days with pain—
Love, if thou wilt, these fair maidens: be
Kinder to them than thou art to me.
Love and be happy; remember this,
The days of youth are the days of bliss.”
Then she said to the maidens assembled there:
“Sweet-lipped damsels, beware, beware!
Toil, heart and soul, in his service, nor shrink
From poison itself if he bid you drink.
Whate’er he may order with joy obey,
And cast your own lives for his sake away.
And, whoe’er be the maiden who wins his heart,
The tidings first to mine ear impart.”
She spoke impatient, and, all untrue,
On the tablet of wish a false picture drew.
She would watch her time, if his love were shown,
If he fain would be with his darling alone,
Herself to his side in her stead would creep,
And the sweet, sweet fruit for herself would reap.

Neath the palm-tree's shade she would watch and wait,
And count herself blest with a stolen date.

So Yúsuf was set on the splendid seat,
And she left for tribute her heart at his feet.
She called about him that fair young crowd,
And her head in obeisance each cypress bowed.
She turned to the palace her steps: behind
With her love was her heart and her soul and her
mind.

The lover is true who consents to go
Far from his love if she wills it so,
Obeys her pleasure and bears, content,
The bitter sorrow of banishment.
Parting is torture, but sorer pain
Is to live in her presence when hope is vain.

The Slave-Girls.

ARRAYED like a bride with the golden light
Of stars on her dark robe came queenly Night,
The Pleiades strung from her ear she wore,
And her hand the full moon for a mirror bore.
His youthful attendants round Yúsuf stood
In the charms of their frolicsome maidenhood.
Ranged in a ring round his seat they strove
To capture his heart in the snares they wove.
“Come to me, come,” said the first, “and I
Will give thee the sugar these lips supply.
Steal what thou wilt from my mouth, and eat,
Like a parrot, the candy, and find it sweet.”
One shot a glance from her bright eye, and, “O
Fairer,” she said, “than all words can show,
I mark thee with world-seeing glances; come nigh,
And be thou the apple that shines in mine eye.”
One said, as her silk-vestured form she displayed:
“Let thy head on this cypress be tenderly laid.
Where wilt thou look for sweet slumber, denied
If thou take not thy rest by this cypress’s side?”

One twisted a ring of her tress with a sigh :
“ Ah, like a ring headless and footless am I.¹
Open the door, to thy breast will I cling ;
Let me not hang on that door like a ring.”
One to her shoulder the loose sleeve drew,
And her rounded arm was exposed to view :
“ Let this amulet lie round thy neck to keep
The evil eye far from thy gentle sleep.”
One twisted a hair round her dainty waist :
Thus with one hair was another hair graced.
“ Oh, circle my waist with thine arm,” cried she,
“ For my soul has flown to my lips for thee.”

Thus in order each rose-lipped maid
Her snare of temptation to win him laid.
Those flowers of the garden, though fresh and bright,
Were but as weeds in his steadfast sight.
He looked on each temptress, and saw in her,
If not an idol, an idol-worshipper,
And only one wish in his heart he knew,—
To lead them to worship where worship is due.
The faith that was in him made strong his speech
To banish all doubt, and the truth to teach :
“ Beautiful maidens, whose charms are worth
The passionate love of the sons of earth,

¹ “ Without head or foot ” is a common expression to signify utter helplessness.

Come, the path of the only true faith pursue,
And scorn low pleasures unworthy of you.
One God is above us : all those who stray
Will He guide aright to His perfect way.
He watered our clay with His mercy's dew,
And the seed of knowledge He set there grew
Till the young plant rose from the parent root,
And bore in earth's garden the perfect fruit.
Yes, the tree springs high from the lowly sod,
And bears fruit for those who will worship God ;
Lord of the worlds, the One God must be
Served and worshipped, and only He.
Oh come, and to Him be our worship paid ;
We are poor, indeed, if we lose His aid.
Let us bow the heads which He gave, and fall
Low on our knees to the Lord of all.
Shall the foot and the head be deemed equal ? How
Shall a sage to his fellow in worship bow ?
Will he grave for himself a fair idol, and moan
For the love of the image he carved of stone ?
Nay, he knows of what stuff the fair image is made,
He knows how the service of love would be paid."

From the fall of night till the morning broke,
To the listening maidens thus Yúsuf spoke.
Each lip sang his praise, and the penitent crowd
Their heads in obedience before him bowed.

Then he taught the true faith with his moving speech,
And the pure honey sweetened the lips of each.
Ah, blessed honey! One drop has power
To sweeten a life till the dying hour,
For all, save the Devs, who refuse to heed,
In their blindness, the strength of the holy creed.
But no ill from their evil eye can betide
The sage who makes the true Faith his guide.

Zulaikha rose at the break of day,
And joyous to Yúsuf she bent her way,
She looked on the maids as they stood round the youth,
And drank from his lips the new words of truth.
She looked on the idols, in dust o'erthrown,
And the rosary clasped, and the broken zone.¹
Lips praising the Lord Almighty she heard,
And saw eyes to new worship attuned and stirred.
"Thou art from thy head to thy foot," she cried,
"The disturber of hearts, and their joy and pride.
A new light gleams from thy glorified brow
With a beauty I never have marked till now.
What hast thou done that this lustre and grace
Should open the door of new charms in thy face?
What drug hast thou eaten to give thee this gleam,
And raise thee o'er earth's brightest darlings supreme?

¹ The girdle worn by Fire-worshippers, as they are unjustly called, is the general emblem of infidelity.

It seems that this bevy of maidens, sweet
With their rosy lips and their silver feet,
Have combined all the gifts of their beauty and thrown
A glory upon thee to heighten thine own.
For fruit ripens fruit when the clusters hang nigh,
And most lovely are lovers when loved ones are by."

From her rosebud mouth the gay words came fast;
But he opened no petal: she ceased at last.
While his lips were sealed in silence there came
A rosy flush, o'er his cheek, of shame.
Abashed in spirit, he looked not round,
But kept his eyes silently bent to the ground.
Zulaikha saw that he still was stern,
And no pitying glance on her eye would turn.
She lit in her bosom the torch of regret,
And the fire of despair to her soul she set,
With a heavy heart bade her love adieu,
And, to hide her face, to her chamber flew.

Fresh Counsel.

DEEP in despair was Zulaikha, slain
With the love of the boy whom she wooed in vain.
One night she summoned her nurse to her side,
Where gently she bade her be seated, and cried :
“ Strength of this frame when my limbs are weak,
Lamp of my soul when thy light I seek,
Thy nursling owes thee each breath that she draws ;
If she lives, the sweet milk of thy love is the cause.
Love more than a mother’s, too deep to be told,
Has raised me up to the rank I hold.
How long must I pine with my fond bosom scarred,
How long from that soul of the world be debarred ?
Wilt thou not aid me, and tenderly guide
My feet to the harbour that still is denied ?
What profits it me that my palace walls hold
My friend and myself, if that friend is so cold ?
The lover, whose darling refuses to hear,
Is far from his love, though he seem to be near.
If spirit from spirit be still far away,
What fruit has the meeting of water and clay ? ”

“Sweet child of the Peris,” the nurse replied,
“Though what were a Peri if set by thy side?
God gave thee thy beauty to steal from the wise
Their heart and their face with thy ravishing eyes.
If a painter of china thy form portrayed,
And hung in a temple the picture he made,
The very idols to life would spring,
And their souls be the slaves of so fair a thing.
On the mountain height if thy cheek were shown,
Love would throb and thrill in the hard flint stone.
When to the garden thy steps are led,
Each dry tree raises his amorous head.
Each fawn on the plains when thy form she spies,
Would sweep thee a path with the fringe of her eyes.
When the charm of thy lip dropping sugar is heard,
From river and sky come the fish and the bird.
Why art thou sad, when such beauty is thine?
Why yield to thy sorrow, and bitterly pine?
Shoot out from that eye but one arrow, and thou
Wilt conquer the boy with the bow of thy brow.
Coil but a lock of those tresses, his feet
Will be caught in that beautiful snare when you meet.”
“How can I tell thee the cruel scorn,”
Zulaikha said, “that I long have borne?
Can I show my beauty to one whose eye
Is bent on the ground when my step is nigh?”

Were I the moon, he would turn away :
The sun, he would shrink from his golden ray.
If, his own eye's apple, I lent him light,
Scarce would he welcome the boon of sight.
Ah ! if a glance on mine eye he would throw,
The pangs that I suffer perchance he might know.
Those griefs would find place in his heart ; but he
Would never languish for love like me.
'Tis not only his beauty that kills me ; no,
'Tis the cold, cold heart, where no spark will glow.
Ah ! if but a pang for my sake he had felt,
Thus with my lover I never had dealt."
"Thou whose beauty casts on the sun a shade"—
The nurse to her lady this answer made—
"I have wrought a plan, and I trust that rest
Will at length be thine from the thought in my breast.
Bring forth thy treasure stored up of old,
Lade a camel with silver, a mule with gold.
I will build a palace like Iram fair,
And a skilful painter shall labour there
To paint on the walls with seductive charms,
Zulaikha folded in Yúsuf's arms.
If, for a moment, he visit the place,
He will see thee locked in his own embrace.
Then will he yearn for thy touch, and at length
The love of thy beauty will grow to its strength.

Soon will he yield with his senses on fire,
And naught will be left for thy heart to desire."

She heard the counsel: her heart was bold:
She brought forth the stores of her silver and gold;
And her wealth, fond fancies therewith to build,
She gave to the nurse to be spent as she willed.

The Palace.

THEY who raised the dome of this story say
 That the nurse, whom the plan of her brain made gay,
 Called in a wise master, his aid to lend,
 With a hundred arts at each finger's end ;
 A skilled geometer, trained and tried,
 Through the maze of the stars a most trusty guide.
 He had learned his figures from *Almagest*,¹
 And his problems were troubles to Euclid's rest.
 If he found no compasses ready at hand,
 Two fingers drew deftly the circle he planned,
 And the lines that he wanted most straight and true
 Without the help of a rule he drew.
 He had mounted up to the seventh sphere,
 And built in Saturn a belvedere.
 If his hand but turned to the mason's saw,
 The stone grew soft as the clay for awe.
 When to architecture he turned his thought,
 Wondrous and fair were the works he wrought.

¹ Plotemy's *Syntaxis Magna*, translated into Arabic under the title *Al Megiste*, about 800 A.D.

The endless plain of the world on the space
Of his finger-nail he could truly trace,
And with heightened charm in the sketch he
drew

The shape of a fairer creation grew.
There was life and soul in the drawing when
The lines were sketched by his artist pen.
If his fingers had graven a bird of stone,
It had risen up in the air and flown.
By the nurse's order his hand of gold
Began the work on the plan she told.
There was hope in the sheen of the polished walls,
And the dawn of bliss gleamed through the stately
halls.

The brightest marble adorned the floor,
And ivory shone on each ebony door.
Within the palace were chambers seven,
In number and sheen like the storeys of heaven,
Pure and polished and fair to view,
Each wrought of stone of a different hue ;
The seventh, fair as the seventh sphere—
All words, all painting would fail me here—
Forty gold pillars upheld, inlaid
With jewels, and beasts and birds portrayed.
Against each column a musk-deer leant,
And stored in the gold was the precious scent ;

And peacocks wrought in pure gold displayed
Their jewelled plumes in the long colonnade.
But a special marvel, eclipsing them,
Was a shady tree with a silver stem.
Never a man might its like behold,
With leaves of turkis and boughs of gold.
On each branch was a bird, a wonder of skill,
With emerald wings and a ruby bill.

The painter there, to his orders true,
The forms of Zulaikha and Yúsuf drew,
Like lovers both of one heart and mind,
With the arm of each round the other twined.
Like heaven was the ceiling, for wrought thereon
The sun and the moon in their glory shone.
In the prime of Spring on the walls outspread
To the wondering view was a bright rose-bed,
And the eye might mark in each narrow space
The rose-sprays twined in a close embrace.
Wherever the foot on the carpet stepped
Two lovely roses together slept.
Search through the palace, no spot was there
But showed a type of that beauteous pair.
Under the foot, overhead, and around,
An emblem of two happy lovers was found.
The love of Zulaikha still grew meanwhile,
And rose each day with the rising pile.

As the idol-house met her eager gaze,
With fiercer fire was her heart ablaze.
There thrills a new pang through the lover's breast
When he looks on the picture of her he loves best,
The fair lines of her features his woes recall,
And he sinks in his sorrow love's helpless thrall.

In the Palace.

ZULAIKHA opened her hand and decked
The finished work of the Architect.
Tissue of gold on the floor was strown,
And its beauty enhanced with a golden throne.
Jewelled lamps on the walls were hung,
And odorous herbs were beneath them flung.
She gathered together all things most fair,
And unrolled the carpet of pleasure there.
But amid the charms of the sumptuous hall
She longed only for Yúsuf, far dearer than all.
A heavenly palace is dark and dim
To a lover whose darling is far from him.

She would summon Yúsuf, once more they would
meet :

She would set him high on a princely seat,
She would woo his beauty and win success
With her tender guile and her soft caress,
Or feed on his lips and beguile her care
With the tangled locks of the rebel's hair.

But to conquer his heart she would add a grace
To her peerless form and her perfect face.
Her beauty needed no art, and yet
A current stamp by its aid was set.
The rose of the garden is fair to view,
But lovelier still with her pearls of dew.

She freshened the tint of her roses and spread
A livelier hue where a bud was dead.
She darkened the line of her eyebrows, so
To curve the new moon to a full rainbow.
Her hair, like the musk of China, which fell
In long black tresses she braided well,
And the pink of her delicate neck between
The coils that hung over her shoulders was seen.
She prepared the spell of her witching eye,
And darkened the lid with the jetty dye.
She set here and there a dark spot on her cheek,
And these were the words that her looks would
speak :

“Thy face is so fair, love, that I at the view
Consume, heart and soul, like the seeds of the rue.”¹
Her fingers deftly with henna she stained,
That his heart thereby might be caught and detained ;
But a painter coloured her palm with care,
For with this a picture she hoped to snare.

¹ The seeds are black and are burnt as charms.

The jujube's tint, on her filberts spread,
Spoke of tears of blood that her eyes had shed.
The fair new moon¹ of each delicate nail,
Came full into sight from the shrouding veil,
That the new moon² of bliss might at length
appear

And announce that the feast of her joy was near.
Beside her cheek was an earring-set,
And a moon and a star in conjunction met.
Ah, might that meeting herself unite
With the moon of the Faith, the wide world's
delight!

Across her bosom, like sweet flowers grown
To perfect beauty, a scarf was thrown.
Then she drew on a delicate smock, and her skin
Filled with roses the folds of the jessamine,
Which looked to the eye like a stream that flows
Over a garden of tulip and rose,
A wondrous stream, of fine silver made,
Where two fishes³ at rest on two arms were laid.
On each wrist a fair bracelet shone to enfold
Each glittering fish with a collar of gold.
So by her cheek and her hand was it shown

¹ The white of the nail.

² The appearance of the new moon at the end of Ramazan, the Musalman Lent, is eagerly looked for, as the long fast then ends.

³ Her long shapely hands.

That her charms from the moon to the Fish¹ were
known.

Next the lady her form arrayed
In precious tissue of China brocade.
She shone so bright in that robe, Chinese
To her as an idol had bent their knees.
On her jet-black garner of hair was set,
Of pearl and gold mingled, a coronet.
No peacock, proud of his jewelled plumes,
Could move more bright through the splendid rooms.
She reckoned on conquest, for who could withstand
The charms seen in the mirror she held in her hand?
Those charms she assayed, and the mirror told
That the beauty she trusted was current gold.
As she thought of her treasures her joy rose high,
And nothing was wanting save one to buy.

She sent her maidens and bade them call
Yúsuf to visit her new-built hall.
He came, bright, noble, and mild, like the sun
And the moon and Mercury joined in one.
No mixture of clay made his nature base,
And light, all light, were his brow and face.
One glance from that eye, and the world is aglow:
He speaks, and all nations his utterance know.

¹ Her cheek is the moon above the earth, and her hand the Fish on which the earth rests.

Zulaikha saw, and the flame rose high,
Like the spark that falls where the reeds are dry.
“Purest of creatures, thou lamp to guide
The eyes of those who see best,” she cried.
“O servant faithful and prompt to obey,
High favour and grace should thy care repay.
Thy dutiful love I can never forget,
And my glory and pride is my collar of debt,
Come, and to-day will I labour to show
Some slight return for the debt I owe :
Nay, long in the record of time shall live
The meed I bestow and the thanks I give.”

With gentle charm and resistless sway
To the first of the chambers she led the way.

Soon as the door of pure gold he passed,
With the lock of iron she closed it fast.
The door she closed, but the secret nursed
Deep in her heart from her lips outburst.
Thus she addressed him : “O thou, the whole
Wish and desire of my hungry soul,
Thy vision appeared in my dreams and beguiled
The sleep from mine eyes when I yet was a child.
That vision brought frenzy and anguish to dwell
For ever with me : I loved thee so well.
Ere yet I had seen thee, to find thee here
I came from my country and all that was dear.

A helpless exile I sate and grieved,
And no sweet comfort my woes relieved.
After long pain I was blest to behold
Thy face; but hope fled, for thine eye was cold.
Look on me no longer with eyes so stern:
Oh, one word of love, one word, in return!"

He bent his head as he answered: "Thou
To whose bidding a hundred high princes bow,
Release me from this sore burthen of woe,
And freedom of heart on thy slave bestow.
Dear lady, longer I would not be
In this curtained chamber alone with thee,
For thou art a flame, and the wool is dry:
The wind art thou and the musk am I.
Is the wool secure when the flame burns fast?
Should the musk be left to the boisterous blast?"
His eager words to the winds she threw:
To the second chamber the boy she drew.
Again she fastened the door: again
The heart of Yúsuf was rent with pain.
She lifted the veil of the days gone by
And poured out her grief with a bitter cry:
"How long wilt thou scorn me, Oh! thou more sweet
Than my soul, and rebel when I fall at thy feet?
I lavished my treasure to buy thee, I gave
My faith and my prudence to make thee my slave.

For I hoped in my heart that, pledged to obey,
Thou wouldst be my comfort and joy and stay.
But no order I give thee wilt thou fulfil,
And thou seekest each path save the path of my will.”
“Sin is not obedience,” he answered; “shame
Ne’er may be linked with true duty’s name.
Each act defying the Master’s law
Is in true service a breach and flaw;
And never mine be the power or will
To break His law by a deed so ill.”
Onward from chamber to chamber they strayed,
And in each for a little their steps delayed.
New arts of temptation in each she plied,
In each new magic and charms were tried.
Through six of the rooms she had led him, still
She won not the game¹ though she played with skill.
Only the seventh was left: therein
Lay her strongest hope that at last she might win.
In this way was nothing of dark despair,
For black to her eyes seemed white and fair.
If no hope from a hundred doors appears,
Eat not thy heart nor give way to tears.
For yet one door thou mayst open and see
A way to the place where thou fain wouldst be.

¹ An allusion to the game of draughts, the Persian board containing six squares, and the game being called “shashdar,” *i.e.*, “six-doored.”

Flight.

THESE are the words of the bard who sings
This ancient story of mystic things.
To the seventh chamber their steps they bent,
And Zulaikha cried in her discontent :
“Pass not this chamber unnoticed by,
And lay thy foot on this loving eye.”

He entered and sate where she bade him : again
She fastened the door with a golden chain.
No spy, no stranger might there intrude
To break the charm of the solitude.
’Twas made for the loved and the lover alone,
And the dread of the censor was there unknown.
The loved one’s beauty was there more bright,
And the lover’s heart sang a song of delight.
No more was the bosom’s soft flame concealed,
And the spirit of love had a limitless field.

Full, eyes and heart, of the flame she fanned,
She seized in wild passion her darling’s hand,
And with gentle magic of words most sweet,
Half led and half drew his slow steps to a seat.

She threw herself there by his side. Then broke
A flood of hot tears from her eyes, and she spoke:
“Look on me, look on me once, my sweet:
One tender glance from those eyes, I entreat.
Then if the sun saw my glad face, he
Moon-like might borrow new light from me.
How long wilt thou see my poor heart’s distress?
How long wilt thy heart be so pitiless?”

She told her love, and her sorrow woke
With a pang renewed at each word she spoke.
But Yúsuf looked not upon her: in dread
He lowered his eyes and he bent his head.
As he looked on the ground in a whirl of thought
He saw his own form on the carpet wrought,
Where a bed was figured of silk and brocade,
And himself by the side of Zulaikha laid.
From the pictured carpet he looked in quest
Of a spot where his eye might, untroubled, rest.
He looked on the wall, on the door; the pair
Of rose-lipped lovers was painted there.
He lifted his glance to the Lord of the skies:
That pair from the ceiling still met his eyes.
Then the heart of Yúsuf would fain relent,
And a tender look on Zulaikha he bent,
While a thrill of hope through her bosom passed
That the blessed sun would shine forth at last.

The hot tears welled from her heart to her eyes,
And she poured out her voice in a storm of sighs :
“ List to my prayer, thou sweet rebel, and calm
The pangs of my heart with thy healing balm.
Thou art Life’s Water : these lips are dry ;
Thou art life for ever : I faint and die.
As thirsty eyes when no water they see,
As the dead without hope, so am I without thee.
For years has my heart in its love for thee bled.
And, fasting, outworn, I have tossed on my bed.
Oh, let me no longer in misery weep :
Give my body its food, give mine eyelids their sleep,
Oh, hear my entreaties : on thee I call
In the name of the God who is Lord over all ;
By the excellent bloom of that cheek which He
 gave,
By that beauty which makes the whole world thy
 slave ;
By the splendour that beams from that beautiful brow
That bids the full moon to thy majesty bow ;
By the graceful gait of that cypress, by
The delicate bow that is bent o’er thine eye ;
By that arch of the temple devoted to prayer,
By each fine-woven mesh of the toils of thy hair ;
By that charming narcissus, that form arrayed
In the sheen and glory of silk brocade ;

By that secret thou callest a mouth, by the hair
Thou callest the waist of that body most fair;
By the musky spots on thy cheek's pure rose,
By the smile of thy lips when those buds uncloze;
By my longing tears, by the sigh and groan
That rend my heart as I pine alone;
By thine absence, a mountain too heavy to bear,
By my thousand fetters of grief and care;
By the sovereign sway of my passion, by
My carelessness whether I live or die;
Pity me, pity my lovelorn grief:
Loosen my fetters and grant relief:
An age has scorched me since over my soul
The soft sweet air of thy garden stole.
Be the balm of my wounds for a little; shed
Sweet scent on the heart where the flowers are dead.
I hunger for thee till my whole frame is weak:
Oh, give me the food for my soul which I seek."
"Fair daughter," said he, "of the Peri race—
But no Peri can match thee in form or face—
Tempt me no more to a deed of shame,
Nor break the fair glass of a stainless name.
Drag not my skirt through the dust and mire,
Nor fill my veins with unholy fire.
By the Living God, the great Soul of all,
Inner and outward and great and small,

From whose ocean this world like a bubble rose,
And the sun by the flash of His splendour glows;
By the holy line of my fathers, whence
I have learned the fair beauty of innocence;
From whom I inherit my spirit's light,
And through them is the star of my fortune bright;
If thou wilt but leave me this day in peace,
And my troubled soul from this snare release,
Thou shalt see thy servant each wish obey,
And with faith unshaken thy grace repay.
The lips of thy darling to thine shall be pressed,
And the arms that thou lovest shall lull thee to rest.
Haste not too fast to the goal: delay
Is often more blessed than speed on the way,
And the first paltry capture is ever surpassed
By the nobler game that is netted at last."

Zulaikha answered: "Ah, never think
That the thirsty will wait for the morrow to drink.
My spirit has rushed to my lips, and how
Can I wait for the joy that I long for now?
My heart has no power to watch and wait
For the tender bliss that will come so late.
Thy pleading is weak, and no cause I see
Why thou shouldst not this moment be happy with me."

Then Yúsuf answered: "Two things I fear—
The judgment of God, and the Grand Vizier.

If the master knew of the shameful deed,
With a hundred sorrows my heart would bleed.
Full well thou knowest my furious lord
Would strike me dead with his lifted sword.
And think of the shame that the sin would lay
On my guilty soul at the Judgment Day,
When the awful book is unclosed wherein
Recording angels have scored my sin."

"Fear not thy master," Zulaikha cried;
"At some high feast when I sit by his side,
A poisoned cup from this hand shall he take,
And sleep till Doomsday shall bid him wake.
And the God thou servest, I hear thee say,
Pardons His creatures who err and stray.
Still, their sole mistress, the keys I hold
Of a hundred vaults full of gems and gold.
All this will I give to atone for thy sin,
And thy God's forgiveness will surely win."

"Ne'er can my heart," he made answer, "incline
To injure another by deed of mine;
Least of all my lord, who with tender thought
Bade thee cherish and honour the slave he bought.
And will my God, whom no thanks can pay,
Take a bribe to pardon my sin to-day?
Shall the grace which a life cannot buy be sold
By the Living God for thy gems and gold?"

“O King,” she said, “to high fortune born,
May throne and crown be thine to adorn!
My soul is the mark of the arrows of pain,
And excuse on excuse thou hast marshalled in vain.
Crooked, contemptible, all unmeet
For a noble heart is the way of deceit.
God grant that my heart from deceit may be free,
And let me not hear these pretences from thee.
I am sorely troubled: Oh, give me rest;
Grant, willing, unwilling, this one request.
In words, idle words, have my days passed by,
And ne’er with my wishes wouldst thou comply.
A truce to pretences, or thou wilt repent
That thine eye would not glow nor thy heart relent.
A fierce flame has lighted the reeds of my heart;
Thou canst look on the flame and stand heedless apart.
What boots it to burn in this flame of desire,
If thine eyes be undimmed by the smoke of the fire?
Come, pour a cool stream on the hot flame, if I
Fail to melt thy cold heart with the heat of a sigh.”
For new excuses his lips unclosed,
But with swift impatience she interposed:
“My time thou hast stolen while fondly I hung
On the guiling words of thy Hebrew tongue.
No more evasion: my wish deny,
And by mine own hand will I surely die.

Unless thy warm arm round my neck I feel,
I will sever that neck with the biting steel.
If fondly around me thou wilt not cling,
A streak of my blood shall thy neck enring.
A lily-like dagger shall rend my side,
And my smock in blood like a rose shall be dyed.
Then shall my soul and my body part,
And thy guile no longer distress my heart.
My lifeless corse the Vizier will see,
And the crime of the murder will rest on thee.
Then under the earth, when the doom is passed,
Near this loving heart thou wilt lie at last.”
She drew from the pillow, distraught with grief,
A dagger grey as a willow leaf,
And, fierce with the fire of fever, laid
To her thirsty throat the bright cold blade.
Up sprang Yúsuf; his fingers’ hold
Circled her wrist like a bracelet of gold.
“Master this passion, Zulaikha,” he cried;
“Turn from thy folly, oh, turn aside.
Wilt thou not strive for the wished-for goal?
Wilt thou abandon the aim of thy soul?”
She fancied his heart was relenting; she thought
His love would give her the bliss she sought.
The gleaming steel on the ground she threw,
And hope sprang up in her breast anew.

She sugared his lip with a touch of her own :
One arm was his collar and one his zone.
With a long sweet kiss on his lips she hung,
And an eager arm round his neck was flung.

One nook of the chamber was dark with the shade
Of a curtain that glittered with gold brocade.
And Yúsuf questioned her : " What or who
Is behind the curtain concealed from view ? "
" It is he," she answered, " to whom, while I live,
My faithful service I still must give :
A golden idol with jewelled eyes—
A salver of musk in his bosom lies.
I bend before him each hour of the day,
And my head at his feet in due worship lay.
Before his presence this screen I drew
To be out of the reach of his darkened view.
If I swerve from religion I would not be
Where the angry eyes of my god may see."
And Yúsuf cried with a bitter cry :
" Not a mite of the gold of thy faith have I.
Thine eye is abashed before those that are dead,
And shrinks from the sight of the lifeless in dread.
And God Almighty shall I not fear,
Who liveth and seëth and ever is near ? "

He ceased : from the fond dream of rapture he woke ;
From the arms of Zulaikha he struggled and broke.

With hasty feet from her side he sped,
And burst open each door on his way as he fled.
Bolt and bar from the stanchions he drew—
All opened before him as onward he flew.
Of his lifted finger a key was made,
Which every lock at a sign obeyed.
But Zulaikha caught him, with steps more fast,
Or ever the farthest chamber he passed.
She clutched his skirt as he fled amain,
And the coat from his shoulder was rent in twain.
Reft of his garment he slipped from her hand
Like a bud from its sheath when the leaves expand.
She rent her robe in her anguish; low
On the earth, like a shadow, she lay in her woe.
A bitter cry from her heart she sent,
And uttered these words in her wild lament:
“ Ah, woe is me for my luckless fate!
He has left my heart empty and desolate.
Ah, that the game from my net should slip!
Ah, that the honey should mock my lip!
A spider once, I have heard them say,
Went forth in its hunger to hunt for prey.
On a bough a falcon had taken her stand,
Who had fled from her rest on a royal hand.
The spider would weave round her wings a snare
To hinder her flight through the fields of air.

It laboured long on this toil intent
Till all the fine threads of its store were spent.
At length the falcon her pinions spread,
And the spider had naught but the broken thread.
I am that spider : I weep and moan,
The single hope of my heart o'erthrown.
The vein of my heart is the broken thread,
And the bird whom I hoped to ensnare is fled.
Each tie to my life is now broken in twain,
And the severed ends in my hand remain."

The False Charge.

THE pen that has written this tale relates,
 That when Yúsuf fled through the palace gates,
 Soon as his foot in the court was set,
 The Grand Vizier and his lords he met.
 The master looked on his troubled face
 And questioned him wherefore he fled apace.
 Yúsuf was ready with apt reply,
 And with courteous words put the question by.
 The Grand Vizier took his hand in his own,
 And they came where Zulaikha sate brooding alone,
 She saw them together, and cried, dismayed,
 To her own sad spirit, "Betrayed! betrayed!"
 Moved by the fancy, in loud lament,
 The veil of the secret she raised and rent:
 "O Balance of Justice, what sentence is due
 To him who to folly thy wife would woo?
 And, false to his duty, has plotted within
 The folds of his treason a deed of sin?"
 "Speak, fairest one, speak: let thy tale be clear,
 Who has thus dared?" said the Grand Vizier.

“The Hebrew servant,” she cried, “has done
This thing, whom thy favour has made a son.
Freed from the trouble and toil of the day,
Here in my chamber asleep I lay,
He came to the bed where alone I repose,
And would pluck the flower of the spotless rose;
But the hand of the robber my slumber broke,
With a start and a cry from my rest I woke.
He started in fear when I raised my head,
And swift to the door of the chamber fled.
He fled amain, but I followed fast
And caught him ere yet from the palace he passed.
I caught his garment, my strength outspent,
And it split as the leaf of a rose is rent.
The garment he wears on his shoulders view,
And see that the words which I speak are true.
Now were it best for a little time
To send him to prison to mourn his crime;
Or let the sharp lash on his tender skin
Cure the wild boy of his wish to sin.
Let the scourge be heavy, the pain severe,
That others in time may be warned and fear.”
The Grand Vizier in amazement heard:
His visage changed and his heart was stirred,
From the path of justice he turned aside,
And his tongue was a sword of rebuke as he cried:

“ Treasures of pearl and of gold I gave,
When I weighed out my jewels to purchase my slave.
I made thee my son of mine own free grace,
And gave thee beside me an honoured place.
I gave thee Zukaikha for guardian to tend
Thy youth with her maidens and be thy friend.
The slaves of my household obeyed thy will;
They were gentle in speech and ne’er wished thee ill.
I made thee lord over all that I had,
And never would suffer thy heart to be sad.
A folly and sin was this thought of thine :
May God forgive thee the base design.
In this evil world, full of grief and woe,
Kindness responsive to kindness we owe.
But thou, all my love and my trust betrayed,
My tender affection with ill hast repaid.
Thou hast broken the bond which the meal had tied,
And the pledge which the salt had sanctified.”

At the wrathful words of the Grand Vizier
He shrank like a hair when the flame is near.
He cried to his master : “ How long, how long
Wilt thou burthen the guiltless with cruel wrong ?
False is the tale that Zulaikha has told :
Her lie is a lamp when the flame is cold.
From the man’s left side came the woman. Who
Will hope that the left will be right and true ?

From the day Zulaikha beheld me first,
A frantic passion her heart has nursed.
About me ever she comes and goes,
And with soft allurements her fancy shows.
But ne'er have I lifted mine eye to her face,
Ne'er have I looked for a kiss or embrace.
Who am I, thy servant, that I should be
The tempter of her who is sacred to thee?
From earthly wealth I had turned away,
To the pangs of exile my heart was a prey.
A word from Zulaikha bade doors unclosed,
And opened a way to a hundred woes.
She called me hither—her spells were sweet—
And drew me aside to this lone retreat.
With passionate pleading her love she pressed,
And made my bosom a stranger to rest.
By many a bar for awhile detained,
The gate of the palace at length I gained.
She followed fast as I fled, and tore
Behind from the shoulder the coat I wore.
This is the story I have to tell:
This, only this and no more, befell.
If thou wilt not believe I am free from guilt,
In the name of Allah do what thou wilt."

Zulaikha heard, and in self-defence
Called Heaven to witness her innocence.

She swore an oath on each sacred thing,
By the throne, and the crown, and the head of the king,
By the rank and state of the Grand Vizier
Whom the monarch honoured and held so dear.

When trouble and doubt in a suit arise,
An oath the place of a witness supplies.
But ah, how oft, when the truth is known,
Has the shameless lie of that oath been shown !
Then she cried, as her tears in a torrent ran :
“From Yúsuf only the folly began.”

Tears, ever ready to flow, supply
Oil for the lamp of a woman's lie.
Fed with this oil the flame waxes in power
And destroys a whole world in one little hour.

The oath of Zulaikha, the sob, the tear,
Shut the blinded eye of the Grand Vizier.
He gave a sergeant his order, like
The strings of a lute the boy's heart to strike,
That the vein of his soul might be racked with pain,
And no trace of compassion or mercy remain ;
That the boy should be lodged in the prison till
They had thoroughly fathomed the secret ill.

The Infant Witness.

HIS hand on Yúsuf the sergeant laid,
 And straight to the prison his way he made.
 The heart of the captive with woe was rent,
 And the eye of complaint on the sky he bent :
 "Thou who knowest all hearts," he cried,
 "And every secret which men would hide ;
 Who discernest the true from the false, whose might
 Save Thine only can bring this secret to light ?
 Since the lamp of truth in my heart Thou hast placed,
 Let me not with the charge of a lie be disgraced.
 Bear witness against mine accuser, I pray,
 That my truth may be clear as the light of day."

He spoke in his sorrow ; and straight to its aim
 The shaft of his prayer from his spirit came.
 In the court was a dame, to Zulaikha allied,
 Who was night and day by Zulaikha's side.
 With her babe on her bosom but three months old
 She seemed her own soul in her arms to hold.
 No line in the volume of life had it read,
 And its tongue like a lily's no word had said.

But it cried: "Vizier, be thy judgment more slow,
And beware of the haste that will end in woe.
No stain of sin upon Yúsuf lies,
But he merits the grace of thy favouring eyes."

In courteous words spake the Grand Vizier
In reply to the speech which he marvelled to hear:
"O thou whom God teaches to speak while yet
With the milk of thy mother thy lips are wet,
Speak clearly and say who lighted the flame
That has threatened the screen of my honour and
fame."

"No informer am I," said the babe, "to reveal
The secret another would fain conceal.
The tell-tale musk is so black in its hue,
For no folds will imprison the scent that steals
through;

And the screen of the petals that round her cling,
Gives a charm to the smile of the rose in Spring.
No secret I utter, no tale I tell,
But I give thee a hint which will serve thee well.
Go hence to Yúsuf; examine and note,
As he lies in the prison, the rent in his coat.
If the rent in the front of the garment appear,
The skirt of Zulaikha from soil is clear.
There is then no light in the charge he brings,
And the stain of a lie to his story clings.

But if rent be the back of the garment, he
From charge of falsehood and slander is free.
Then faithless Zulaikha has turned aside
From the path of truth and has basely lied."

The Grand Vizier to the prison went,
And summoned Yúsuf, to view the rent.
He saw that the garment was torn behind;
And he cried to that woman of evil mind:
"Thou hast forged a lie, and thine art has sent
The innocent boy to imprisonment.
What hast thou gained by thy crafty toils
Since the shame of thy deed on thyself recoils?
Thou hast left the straight path and hast sullied thy
name,

By wooing thy slave to a deed of shame,
From the path of honour thy feet have strayed,
And on him the guilt of thy sin thou hast laid.
The arts and wiles of a woman rend
The heart of a man, and they never will end.
Those who are noble they bring to naught,
And the wisest hearts in their toils are caught.
O that men from the plague of their arts were
free!

O that treacherous woman might cease to be!
Begone: on thy knees in repentance fall,
And pray for forgiveness, thy face to the wall.

Let the tears of contrition thy penitence grace,
And the blot from thy volume of life efface.
And, Yúsuf, set on thy lips a seal:
This tale of dishonour to none reveal.
Enough that thy speech—for thy words were wise—
Has shown thee guiltless and opened mine eyes.”

He spoke; then he turned from the prison: and
food

For tale and jest was his clement mood.
Ah yes; it is good to forgive and forget;
But bounds e'en to mercy itself should be set.
If the man be too mild when the woman sins,
There ends good-nature, and folly begins.
Too patient a part, should thy wife offend,
Makes a rift in thine honour which naught can mend.

The Women of Memphis.

LOVE is ill suited with peace and rest :
 Scorn and reproaches become him best.
 Rebuke gives strength to his tongue, and blame
 Wakes the dull spark to a brighter flame.
 Blame is the censor of Love's bazaar :
 It suffers no rust the pure splendour to mar.
 Blame is the whip whose impending blow
 Speeds the willing lover, and wakes the slow ;
 And the weary steed who can hardly crawl
 Is swift of foot when reproaches fall.
 When the rose of the secret had opened and blown,
 The voice of reproach was a bulbul in tone.¹
 The women of Memphis, who heard the tale first,
 The whispered slander received and nursed.
 Then, attacking Zulaikha for right and wrong,
 Their uttered reproaches were loud and long :
 "Heedless of honour and name she gave
 The love of her heart to the Hebrew slave,

¹ An allusion to the bulbul's love of the rose, whose beauty he sings.

Who lies so deep in her soul enshrined
That to sense and religion her eyes are blind.
She loves her servant. 'Tis strange to think
That erring folly so low can sink ;
But stranger still that the slave she woos
Should scorn her suit and her love refuse.
His cold eye to hers he never will raise ;
He never will walk in the path where she strays.
He stops if before him her form he sees ;
If she lingers a moment he turns and flees.
When her lifted veil leaves her cheek exposed,
With the stud of his eyelash his eye is closed.
If she weeps in her sorrow he laughs at her pain,
And closes each door that she opens in vain.
It may be that her form is not fair in his eyes,
And his cold heart refuses the proffered prize.
If once her beloved one sate with us
He would sit with us ever, not treat us thus.
Our sweet society ne'er would he leave,
But joy unending would give and receive.
But not all have this gift in their hands : to enthrall
The heart they would win is not given to all.
There is many a woman, fair, good, and kind,
To whom never the heart of a man inclined ;
And many a Laila with soft black eye,
The tears of whose heart-blood are never dry."

Zulaikha heard, and resentment woke
To punish the dames for the words they spoke.
She summoned them all from the city to share
A sumptuous feast which she bade prepare.
A delicate banquet meet for kings
Was spread with the choicest of dainty things.
Cups filled with sherbet of every hue
Shone as rifts in a cloud when the sun gleams through.
There were goblets of purest crystal filled
With wine and sweet odours with art distilled.
The golden cloth blazed like the sunlight; a whole
Cluster of stars was each silver bowl.
From goblet and charger rare odours came;
There was strength for the spirit and food for the frame.
All daintiest fare that your lip would taste,
From fish to fowl, on the cloth was placed.
It seemed that the fairest their teeth had lent
For almonds, their lips for the sugar sent.
A mimic palace rose fair to view
Of a thousand sweets of each varied hue,
Where instead of a carpet the floor was made
With bricks of candy and marmalade.
Fruit in profusion, of sorts most rare,
Piled in baskets, bloomed fresh and fair.
Those who looked on their soft transparency felt
That the delicate pulp would dissolve and melt.

Bands of boys and young maidens, fine
As mincing peacocks, were ranged in line ;
And the fair dames of Memphis, like Peris eyed,
In a ring on their couches sate side by side.
They tasted of all that they fancied, and each
Was courteous in manner and gentle in speech.

The feast was ended ; the cloth was raised,
And Zulaikha sweetly each lady praised.
Then she set, as she planned in her wily breast,
A knife and an orange beside each guest :
An orange, to purge the dark thoughts within
Each jaundiced heart with its golden skin.
One hand, as she bade them, the orange clasped,
The knife in the other was firmly grasped.
Thus she addressed them : “ Dames fair and sweet,
Most lovely of all when the fairest meet,
Why should my pleasure your hearts annoy ?
Why blame me for loving my Hebrew boy ?
If your eyes with the light of his eyes were filled,
Each tongue that blames me were hushed and stilled.
I will bid him forth, if you all agree,
And bring him near for your eyes to see.”
“ This, even this,” cried each eager dame,
“ Is the dearest wish that our hearts can frame.
Bid him come ; let us look on the lovely face
That shall stir our hearts with its youthful grace.

Already charmed, though our eyes never fell
On the youth we long for, we love him well.
These oranges still in our hands we hold,
To sweeten the spleen with their skins of gold.
But they please us not, for he is not here :
Let not one be cut till the boy appear."

She sent the nurse to address him thus :
"Come, free-waving cypress, come forth to us.
Let us worship the ground which thy dear feet press,
And bow down at the sight of thy loveliness.
Let our love-stricken hearts be thy chosen retreat,
And our eyes a soft carpet beneath thy feet."

But he came not forth, like a lingering rose
Which the spell of the charmer has failed to uncloze.
Then Zulaikha flew to the house where he dwelt,
And in fond entreaty before him knelt :
"My darling, the light of these longing eyes,
Hope of my heart," thus she spoke with sighs,
"I fed on the hope which thy words had given ;
But that hope from my breast by despair is driven.
For thee have I forfeited all : my name
Through thee has been made a reproach and shame.
I have found no favour : thou wouldst not fling
One pitying look on so mean a thing.
Yet let not the women of Memphis see
That I am so hated and scorned by thee.

Come, sprinkle the salt of thy lip to cure
The wounds of my heart and the pain I endure.
Let the salt be sacred: repay the debt
Of the faithful love thou shouldst never forget."

The heart of Yúsuf grew soft at the spell
Of her gentle words, for she charmed so well.
Swift as the wind from her knees she rose,
And decked him gay with the garb she chose.
Over his shoulders she drew with care,
The scented locks of his curling hair,
Like serpents of jet-black lustre seen
With their twisted coils where the grass is green.
A girdle gleaming with gold, round the waist
That itself was fine as a hair, she braced.
I marvel so dainty a waist could bear
The weight of the jewels that glittered there.
She girt his brow with bright gems; each stone
Of wondrous beauty enhanced his own.
On his shoes were rubies and many a gem,
And pearls on the latchets that fastened them.
A scarf, on whose every thread was strung
A loving heart, on his arm was hung.
A golden ewer she gave him to hold,
And a maid brow-bound with a fillet of gold
In her hand a basin of silver bore,
And shadow-like moved as he walked before.

If a damsel had looked, she at once had resigned
All joy of her life, all the peace of her mind.
Too weak were my tongue if it tried to express
The charm of his wonderful loveliness.

Like a bed of roses in perfect bloom
That secret treasure appeared in the room.
The women of Memphis beheld him, and took
From that garden of glory the rose of a look.
One glance at his beauty o'erpowered each soul
And drew from their fingers the reins of control.
Each lady would cut through the orange she held,
As she gazed on that beauty unparalleled.
But she wounded her finger, so moved in her heart,
That she knew not her hand and the orange apart.
One made a pen of her finger, to write
On her soul his name who had ravished her sight—
A reed which, struck with the point of the knife,
Poured out a red flood from each joint in the strife.
One scored a calendar's lines in red
On the silver sheet of her palm outspread,
And each column, marked with the blood-drops, showed
Like a brook when the stream o'er the bank has flowed.

When they saw that youth in his beauty's pride :
"No mortal is he," in amaze they cried.
No clay and water composed his frame,
But, a holy angel, from heaven he came."

"'Tis my peerless boy," cried Zulaikha, "long
For him have I suffered reproach and wrong.
I told him my love for him, called him the whole
Aim and desire of my heart and soul.
He looked on me coldly ; I bent not his will
To give me his love and my hope fulfil.
He still rebelled : I was forced to send
To prison the boy whom I could not bend.
In trouble and toil, under lock and chain,
He passed long days in affliction and pain.
But his spirit was tamed by the woe he felt,
And the heart that was hardened began to melt.
Keep your wild bird in a cage and see
How soon he forgets that he once was free."

Of those who wounded their hands a part
Lost reason and patience, and mind and heart.
Too weak the sharp sword of his love to stay,
They gave up their souls ere they moved away.
The reason of others grew dark and dim,
And madness possessed them for love of him.
Bare-headed, bare-footed, they fled amain,
And the light that had vanished ne'er kindled
again.

To some their senses at length returned,
But their hearts were wounded, their bosoms
burned.

They were drunk with the cup which was full to the
brim,

And the birds of their hearts were ensnared by him.

Nay, Yúsuf's love was a mighty bowl

With varied power to move the soul.

One drank the wine till her senses reeled ;

To another, life had no joy to yield ;

One offered her soul his least wish to fulfil ;

One dreamed of him ever, but mute and still.

But only the woman to whom no share

Of the wine was vouchsafed could be pitied there.

Threats.

WHEN many rivals compete, the prize
 Waxes more dear in the winner's eyes,
 When another loves the fair maid you seek,
 The love grows strong that before was weak,
 And the flame that languished bursts forth anew
 When eager rivals come near to sue.
 The flame fed afresh on Zulaikha's mind,
 And her heart more strongly to Yúsuf inclined.
 Again she spoke to that lovely band,
 Whom love had wounded in heart and hand :
 " If ye think I had reason, forbear to chide
 And blame me for love which I could not hide.
 The door of friendship is open ; be
 Friends in my trouble and prosper me."

They swept the chords of love's lute and raised
 Their voices in tune and excused and praised.
 " Yes, he is lord of the realm of the soul ;
 There his is the right and the sway and control.
 What creature that looks—nay, even what stone—
 On that lovely face, calls its heart its own ?

If thy love for him be thy sum of distress,
Thine excuse is sufficient, his loveliness.
Breathes there a mortal beneath the sky,
Who can look unmoved on that witching eye?
The heaven has oft compassed the earth, but where
Has it seen a darling so bright and fair?
Thou hast loved the sweet youth, but thou art not to
 blame,
Thy soul is afire, but thy love is no shame.
May his strong heart touched by thy passion
 relent,
And shame make thy darling his coldness repent.”
They ceased. On Yúsuf their eyes they bent,
And addressed him thus in admonishment:
“Joy of the age, from the east to the west,
The fame of thy virtue by all is confessed.
This garden, where roses with thorns we see,
Has ne’er grown a rose without thorns like thee.
Stoop down for a little, and add a grace
To that height by descent from thy lofty place.
Zulaikha is dust for thy feet to tread,
Trail thy skirt for awhile where that dust is spread.
How, O pure one! wilt thou be hurt
By touching the dust for a time with thy skirt?
One wish has Zulaikha: no longer refuse
To grant the sole favour for which she sues.

If thy wish be to have no desires of thine own,
Oh, leave not the thirsty to languish alone.
She has waited on thee, with thy wishes complied ;
Oh, let not the meed of her love be denied.
Regard her entreaties, no longer be coy,
For we fear in our hearts, O too beautiful boy,
If thou still wilt rebel and no warning wilt heed,
The fruit in the end will be bitter indeed.
She will wash out thy love from the depths of her soul,
And a deluge of fury will over thee roll.
Beware, and remember love turned to hate,
Will press the old friend with the sorest weight.
When over the bank the fierce torrents burst,
The mother will tread on the child she nursed.
She threatens a prison. Beware, beware,
And think of the pains that await thee there.
'Tis narrow and dark like a tyrant's grave,
Far from it fly those who have lives to save ;
Where the foul air stifles the living breath,
Where wretches lie who are waiting for death,
The hand of the builder has fashioned there
No narrowest passage for light or air.
Plague is the gift which the close air brings,
And its floor is the soil whence misery springs.
The light of dawn never enters where
The door is closed with the key of despair.

Narrow and blacker than pitch, the chains
Are the only treasure the vault contains.
There without bread, without water, lie
The weary wretches who fain would die.
Warders watch over them, turn by turn,
And their eyes are fierce and their words are stern.
Now say, shall such an ill mansion be,
O heart-enslaver, a home for thee?
Let not thy heart be so cruel; spare
Thyself and open the door to her prayer.
Bend thy proud head as a reed is bent:
Banish all fear from thy heart, and consent.
Or if thy fancy perchance prefer
More winning beauty and turn from her,
To us in secret thy heart incline,
And be ours for ever as we are thine.
See, in our charms we are matchless; see,
Moons lighting the heaven of beauty are we.
Shame makes Zulaikha her own mouth close
When we open our lips whence the honey flows.
How can Zulaikha with us compare?
So sweet are we and so bright and fair."

He heard the voice of the charmers, and knew
That their zeal for Zulaikha was all untrue.
They would lead him to swerve from his faith and err,
But more for the sake of themselves than of her.

His heart was troubled, he turned aside,
And no tender look to their looks replied.
He lifted to heaven his hands and prayed :
“ O Thou who givest the needy aid,
Friend of the humble recluse, the sure
Help and refuge of all who are pure ;
Against the oppressor a strong defence,
The lamp and beacon of innocence ;
Their wiles torment me. The bolt, the bar,
The chains of the prison were better far.
Years in a dungeon were lighter pain
Than to look on the face of these women again.
Thus our hearts grow blind that we cannot see,
And we wander farther and farther from Thee.
If Thou wilt not turn their devices aside
Who have strayed from the path and their faith denied,
Who will not permit me to rest and be free—
If Thou wilt not aid me, ah, woe is me.”

For prison he prayed. Nor would God deny
The boon he sought with his eager cry.
But had Yúsuf asked at His hands release,
The boy unimprisoned had gone in peace.
From the snares of the women the bird had flown,
And the pains of the dungeon he ne'er had known.

Imprisonment.

IN vain they tempted him. No success,
 Had the art of each wily idolatress.
 The pure soul of Yúsuf was still unmoved,
 Nay, firmer still by temptation proved,
 And like bats that flee ere the sun is bright,
 They despaired of the joy of his beauty's light.

But they left not Zulaikha a moment's rest,
 On her sorrowing soul their advice they pressed.
 "Poor suffering creature," 'twas thus they cried,
 "Unworthiest thou to be thus denied ;
 No Houri's child is like Yúsuf fair,
 But he will not listen to grant thy prayer.
 We gave him rebuke and advice enough,
 And the file of our tongue we made sharp and rough.
 But his heart is hard, and he will not feel ;
 The file, though rough, would not bite the steel.
 Let the forge—his prison—be heated, so
 The stubborn iron will melt and glow.
 When the metal grows soft in the flame, the skill
 Of the smith can fashion its form at will.

If the softened iron thou canst not mould,
Why hammer in vain when the steel is cold ? ”

She trusted the words that the charmers spoke,
And hope in her bosom again awoke.
She would prison the treasure her heart loved best,
And make him suffer that she might rest.
When love is not perfect, with one sole thought—
Himself—is the heart of the lover fraught.
He looks on his love as a charming toy,
The spring and source of his selfish joy.
One rose will he pluck from his love, and leave
A hundred thorns her lone heart to grieve.

As Zulaikha sate by her husband's side,
She poured out the rage of her soul and cried :
“ This boy has brought me to grief and shame ;
The high and the humble reproach my name.
Men and women the story tell,
How I pine for the youth whom I love too well ;
That I am the game he has struck with his dart,
And laid on the ground with a bleeding heart.
Barb upon barb in my breast, they say,
Has drained the blood from the stricken prey ;
No hair of my head from that love is free,
And my very self is a stranger to me.
To send him to prison and thus repel
The growing slander, methinks, were well,

And in every street of the town to proclaim
By the voice of the crier the traitor's shame ;
Thus shall be punished the slave who allows
His eye to look on his master's spouse,
And with lawless feet, on the carpet spread
For the lord who owns him, presumes to tread.'
The tongue of reproach will be silent when
My avenging wrath is made known to men."

The plan she spoke to his willing ear,
Delighted the heart of the Grand Vizier.
"I have pondered it long," was the answer he made ;
"Long on my soul has the trouble weighed ;
But I never have pierced a pearl so fine,
Or devised a plan to compare with thine.
The boy is thine own, as thou wilt, to treat ;
Sweep thou the dust from the path of thy feet."

She heard his speech with a joyful smile,
And she turned to Yúsuf the rein of her guile :
"O wish of my heart and desire of mine eyes,
The only treasure on earth I prize,
My lord's permission has left me free
To deal as my will may incline with thee.
Thy head, if I will, in a prison must lie,
Thy foot, if I order, will tread the sky.
Why still rebellious ? why still so blind ?
Bend thy proud spirit at last and be kind.

Oh, come, tread the path of agreement and peace ;
Me from torment, thyself from affliction, release.
Come, grant me my wish ; I with thine will comply ;
In the zenith of glory thy name shall be high.
Beware, beware, or the door will uncloseth
Of a prison fraught with a hundred woes ;
And to lie there in sorrow and chains will be
Less sweet than to sit and smile softly on me.”
He opened his lips in reply : but well
You know the answer I need not tell.
In Zulaikha’s bosom resentment woke,
And thus to the chief of the guard she spoke :
“ Off with his robe and his cap of gold ;
In coarsest woollen his limbs enfold.
His silver with fetters of iron deck,
And bind the slave’s collar about his neck.
Guilty of crime, make him sit on an ass
And through every street of the city pass ;
And let a crier’s loud voice proclaim
That the treacherous servant, lost to shame,
Who dares on his master’s carpet to tread,
Shall thus with scorn to his prison be led.”

The multitude gathered on every side,
And “ God forbid,” in amaze they cried,
“ That from one so fair should come evil deed—
The robber of hearts cause a heart to bleed.

Of the race of the angels he surely is one,
And no deeds of Satan by them are done.
No evil act will the lovely do,
For the sage has said, and his words are true :
'The fair in face are not soiled with sin ;
Less fair are their looks than their souls within.
But he who is hideous in form and face,
Has a heart in his breast that is yet more base.'
And we see the truth of the maxim still,
Ne'er the hideous do good nor the lovely ill."
Thus to the dungeon the boy was driven,
And there to the charge of the jailor given.
Within the prison the saint was led,
And life seemed to return to the corpse of the dead.
A cry of joy from the captives rose,
And happiness came to that house of woes ;
While all in rapture their fetters beat
As they saw the approach of his blessèd feet.
None felt the chain that confined each limb,
The ring on his neck was no bond for him.
A rapturous joy was his gloomy fate,
And a mountain of woe was a straw in weight.
Wherever is one of the Houris' race
She makes a heaven of the dreariest place.
Where the loved one comes with her cheek of rose,
There a rose-bed is though a furnace glows.

When the glad commotion was hushed and still,
To the jailor Zulaikha declared her will :
“ Spare him : with kindness the captive treat ;
Strike the ring from his neck and the chain from his
feet.

Strip off the rough gown from his silver skin ;
Bring silken raiment to robe him in,
Wash the dust of toil from his head, and set
On his brows the bright round of a coronet.
A separate house for his rest prepare,
And lodge him apart from the others there.
The door and the walls with sweet scent perfume ;
Brighten each window and arch of his room ;
And over the floor be a carpet laid
Of silver tissue and gold brocade.”

Within the chamber the captive passed :
The carpet of prayer on the ground he cast,
And raised—for such was his wont each day—
His tranquil face to the arch to pray.
He joyed to have fled from the women’s snare,
And his burthen was light for his heart to bear.
Woe never visits the world but it brings
Sweet scent of the coming of happier things ;
And the weary captive who lies in chains
Feels the breath of a blessing to lighten his pains.

Repentance.

IN this vault of turki's upreared of old,
 The children of Adam are dull and cold ;
 Their hearts are never in thankful mood,
 But their thoughts are still of ingratitude ;
 And the worth is unknown, till they fade away,
 Of the blessings which brighten each passing day.
 Though many a lover may nerve his heart,
 When he deems he is weary of love, to part,
 When the flame of absence is kindled by Doom
 His body will waste and his heart consume.

The light that the rose-cheek of Yúsuf shed
 Made the house of bondage a bright rose-bed ;
 But Zulaikha, whose palace had been more fair
 Than a garden of roses when he was there,
 Felt a deep gloom on her spirit press,
 When she saw not the light of his loveliness.
 Sad was her heart in that dungeon's hold,
 And one sorrow by parting became twofold.

Where is woe like the lover's who looks on the place
 Once blest with the light of his darling's face ?

What comfort is found in the drear rose-bed,
When the thorns are left and the roses are dead ?
Ah, how the heart of the bulbul is torn—
A roseless garden and spears of thorn !
When her look on her desolate garden was bent,
Like a bud unclosing her robe she rent.
Why should the hand of the mourner refrain
From tearing his robe in a torment of pain ?
Let him rend through his bosom a way to his heart
That comfort may enter and banish the smart.

She tore her rose-cheek in her wild despair ;
She rent her locks like the spikenard's hair ;
And her mangled cheek and her hair might show
How she rent her heart in her lonely woe.
Her heart beat her bosom with fingers of stone,
And the war-drum of parting was loud in its tone.
Though queen of the army of beauty, the beat
Of that drum of the foeman proclaimed her defeat.
With both hands she threw ashes and dust on her head,
And a flood of hot tears from her eyes she shed.
That dust and water were clay to close
The rifts in her heart that was rent by her woes ;
But a handful of clay were applied in vain
To a heart which absence has broken in twain.
Her lips of pomegranate were torn by the teeth
Whose pure pearls mangled the ruby beneath ;

But those teeth were pressed on her lip that they
 The torrent that ran from her heart might stay.
 With blue she tinted her cheek of rose,
 Like a lily drenched when the brook o'erflows :
 Red for the days of our joy we keep,
 And blue is their colour who mourn and weep.¹
 With the blood of her heart on her cheek she wrote ;
 With the hand of anguish her knee she smote :
 " Who e'er wrought as I wrought ? "—it was thus she
 complained—

" Who has drunk of the poison which I have drained ?
 What lover's axe in this world of woe
 E'er struck his own foot with so deadly a blow ?
 I tore out mine eyes with this hand : I fell
 In my blindness, self-cast, to the depths of the well.
 A mountain of woe on my back I laid,
 And am crushed to the earth with the load down-
 weighed.

My heart is made blood by the fate that drew
 My eager steps his fair shape to pursue.
 The treacherous Heavens have darkened my day :
 I let my love go and he passed away.
 Estranged from mine own heart no longer I know
 Where balm may be found that will soften my woe."

¹ Kaikáwus, an ancient King of Persia, ordered his subjects to wear blue as mourning for his son.

Thus broken-hearted she made lament,
And ever in weeping the night was spent.
Each thing he had touched, as it met her eye,
Drew from her bosom a long deep sigh.
Sad was her soul, and her eyes were dim,
As she caught up the raiment once worn by him.
But the touch was to her as the breath of the rose,
And soothed the fierce pain of her burning woes.
About her own neck his collar she tied,
With a hundred kisses of love applied :
“This is my collar of glory, nay,
The band of my heart,” she would cry, “and its stay.”
To place her arm in his mantle’s sleeve
Would for a moment her pain relieve ;
As she thought of her love it was touched and kissed,
And with silver filled of her dainty wrist.
She pressed to her eyes—and the touch was sweet—
The skirt that had lain on her darling’s feet,
And, hopeless to fasten her lips on them,
Deluded her soul with a kiss of the hem.
Pearl and ruby in showers she spread
Over the cap that had decked his head.
For once it had shaded the beautiful brow
To which the whole world loved in worship to bow.
To the zone that had girdled his waist she gave
The honour due from a faithful slave ;

As a token most dear of her vanished fawn
 Round her neck for a snare was the girdle drawn.
 With dim eyes weeping, her hands displayed
 The glittering folds of his robe of brocade.
 She bathed its skirts with her tears, and the gleam
 Of the rubies she dropped was on band and seam.

Thus was the grief of Zulaikha renewed
 Through the dreary day by each thing she viewed.
 As she knew not the value of present joy
 The fierce flame of absence must bliss destroy.
 Zulaikha sorrowed, but sorrowed in vain;
 Only patience was left her to heal her pain.
 Yes, patience would bring her the balm of rest,
 But how could she banish her love from her breast?

Death to the lover who weeps alone
 Is the loss of the love he has loved and known.
 Of torments and woe there is none like this—
 To part from one's love after days of bliss.
 If no sweet companionship linked their lives,
 His heart may break, but it still survives.

Zulaikha fain from herself would fly,
 And, of good despairing, would gladly die.
 The wall and the floor with her head she smote,
 The blood-thirsty dagger was raised to her throat.
 She sought, like a watchman, the roof at night
 To cast herself down from the giddy height.

She twisted a cord of her hair, and strove
To stifle her breath with the noose she wove.
She sought release for her weary soul—
A poisonous draught from life's pleasant bowl.
She sickened of all, and would fain destroy
Her life with each thing that was once her joy.

The pitying nurse sought her lady's side,
Kissed her hands and feet and blessed her and cried :
“May thy darling return to dispel thy woe ;
May thy cup with the wine of his love o'erflow !
May a happy meeting thy bliss restore,
With no fear of parting for evermore !
How long shall this folly subdue thee ? Arise,
Throw off thy madness, again be wise.
This sad heart bleeds when thy grief I see :
What woman ever has acted like thee ?
Patience—list to the voice of age—
Patience alone will thy grief assuage.
Impatience has brought thee this fever of pain :
Let patience allay it with soothing rain.
When o'er thee the whirlwinds of sorrow pass,
Flee not before them like scattered grass.
Keep thy foot in thy skirt with undaunted will,
And stand firm in thy place like a rooted hill.
Patience will lead thee to lasting bliss,
And the fruit of thy longing thou shalt not miss.

Every triumph from patience springs,
 The happy herald of better things.
 Through patience the pearl from the rain-drop grows,
 And the diamond shines and the ruby glows ;
 The full ear springs from the scattered seed,
 And food from the ear for the traveller's need.
 So moons come and vanish till babes are born,
 And with moonlike beauty the world adorn."

Zulaikha listened, and, half consoled,
 The outward signs of her grief controlled.
 Rent to the skirt was her robe, but still
 She confined her feet with a stronger will.
 But if for a moment the lover hears,
 The warner speaks to forgetful ears ;
 Hushed is that tongue and no traces remain
 Of the words of wisdom he spoke in vain.

The Visit to the Prison.

WHEN the sun, like Yúsuf, afar in the west,
 In his gloomy prison had sunk to rest ;
 And, like Zulaikha, the mourning skies
 Wept for his loss with their starry eyes ;
 While the skirt of the heavens was dipped in a flood
 Of rose-red hue from its tears of blood ;
 Hot tears for Yúsuf Zulaikha shed,
 And her eyes like the evening horizon were red.
 She went to her chamber to sigh and grieve,
 And the wail of the day was renewed at eve.

When the day of a lover is merged in night
 Again wakes his pain with redoubled might.
 For the loss of his love his lone day is dim ;
 But the night is yet darker and sadder for him.
 Dark is the day when she comes not back,
 But the night is darker, deep black upon black
 For night to the lover comes heavy with gloom,
 And fierce is the offspring that comes from her womb
 When the terrible child is brought forth it lives
 On blood for the milk which a mother gives.

Ah, think what woe must the mother bring
From whom a child thirsting for blood can spring!
In the wild impatience that drove her mad,
The night to Zulaikha was gloomy and sad;
The darling who ravished her heart was away,
And her night was moonless and sunless her day.
There was splendour of torches, yet dark was each place
Where shone not the light of her loved one's face.
Through the stress of her anguish she closed no eye;
And she said with hot tears and a bitter cry:
"How fares he this night? Ah, how can I tell?
Who is the bail that they serve him well?
Who has smoothed the folds at his feet, and set
In order the bolster and coverlet?
Whose hand has lighted a lamp by his bed,
And softened the pillow to rest his head?
Who has loosened the zone from his waist, and told,
To lull him, tales of the times of old?
Has the prison injured his tender frame?
Like a bird encaged, is the captive tame?
Have his roses paled in the dungeon air?
Are his locks still bright as the spikenard's hair?
Is the bloom of the rose-garden faded and dead?
Is the splendour that shone from the spikenard fled?
Is his heart like a rosebud compressed with woes,
Or expanded in joy like the perfect rose?"

Thus till a watch of the night was spent
She poured out her anguish in wail and lament.
Then strength departed, endurance died ;
The brook of her patience was empty and dried.
Then the flame of her longing flashed forth : with eyes
Streaming she called to her nurse : " Arise,
I can wait no longer : arise, let us go
Unseen of all to the house of woe.
There we will hide in some corner ; thus
The moon of our prison will shine for us.
With the rosy cheek of one's darling, there
No prison may be, but the spring is fair.
Let others be glad when gay gardens they see :
This bud of the prison is all to me."

In graceful motion away she sped,
And the nurse followed close where the lady led.
She came like a moon to the prison wall,
And the warder rose at her secret call.
He opened the gate as he moved the bar
And showed her the moon of her love afar.
On the carpet of worship his head he bent,
As the sun declines ere the day is spent.
Then he reared like a flambeau his stately height,
And threw o'er the captives long rays of light.
Then he curved his back to a moon whose glow
Fell on the carpet outspread below.

Then, like a rose-twigg by the night-wind swayed,
He bowed and to God for forgiveness prayed ;
Then in humble hope with his head depressed
Like a modest violet sate at rest.

Silent and hidden she moved no limb,
Far from herself but so near to him.
But she wept in her heart, and the tears she shed
Turned the jasmine hue of her cheek to red.
With pearl she mangled the ruby, and tore
The rich ripe dates that the palm-tree bore.
Then her grief burst forth, and while hot tears ran
From their fountain in torrents, she thus began :
“ Eye and lamp of the lovely ones, thou
Whom the fairest would follow with prayer and vow,
In my breast thou hast kindled a flame of fire ;
From my head to my foot I am all desire.
But no drop of pity hast thou bestowed
To quench the flame when its fury glowed.
Thou hast gored my breast and no pity felt
For the cruel wound which thy hand has dealt.
Hast thou no ruth, O most heartless, none
For me rejected, oppressed, undone ?
I bear from thee daily fresh grief and scorn :
Ah, woe is me that I ever was born !
Or if she had borne me, a babe unblest,
Would I ne’er had lain on my mother’s breast,

Ne'er on kindly milk from her bosom fed,
But deadly poison had sucked instead."

Thus sad Zulaikha wept and complained;
But cold and unyielding his heart remained.
Unmoved was his soul, or no sign betrayed
That his ruth was stirred as she wept and prayed.

The night passed away: the pure skies o'erhead
Wept tears like those which the holy shed.
Loud sounded the drum from the palace, high
Rose through the air the Muezzin's cry.
The watch-dog's baying was hushed, and round
His throat for a collar his tail was wound.
Up started the cock from his sleep; his throat
Sent forth to the morning its clarion note.
Then Zulaikha rose; from the jail she withdrew,
But its threshold she kissed ere she bade it adieu.

Long as her moon in that prison lay,
To its portal nightly she found her way.
Thus ever she went and she came; and this
Was her heart's sole comfort, her only bliss.
None loves a garden where bright flowers blow
As she loved to visit that house of woe.
Yes, when your love is in prison, where
Will your soul find comfort save only there?

The Palace-Roof.

NIGHT o'er the lover a soft veil throws
To lighten the pang of his bitterest woes,
And brings him many a counsel that lay
Lost in the toil of the bustling day.
As her nightly sorrow grew less and less,
And her anguish lost some of its bitterness,
The day returning her pangs renewed,
And the hundred woes of her solitude.
Her road to the prison by day was barred,
And away from that prison her life was hard.
Some costly trifle each morn she laid
In the willing hand of her trustiest maid,
And instead of herself she commissioned her
To look on the face of the prisoner.
When from her errand the maid returned,
A thousand caresses her task had earned.
On the damsel's foot she would rest her cheek;
She would kiss her eyes and thus softly speak:
"Thy foot has been where my darling lies,
And his cheek has been seen by these happy eyes."

No kiss of mine on his eyes may be pressed ;
My cheek on his foot is forbidden to rest.
Yet this eye of thine for a moment—for this
Has looked on the eye of my love—I kiss ;
And I lay my cheek on thy feet instead,
Which have trodden the ground which my darling's
tread."

Then would she question the maiden : "How
Was the glance of his eye ? And his cheek ? And
brow ?

In his daily life is there knot or thorn ?
Is his face untroubled, or pale and worn ?
Has the lonely air of the prison made
His body suffer, his roses fade ?
Did he deign to taste of the dainties I sent ?
Does he think of her whose heart he has rent ?"
She would ask and listen ; then swift would she rise
And hasten away with her streaming eyes.

High on her house stood a turret between,
Whose pillars the roof of the prison was seen ;
There, when the hours of the night had flown,
She would close the door fast and would sit alone.
On each cheek was a ruby, a pearl in each eye,
As she gazed on the prison and said with a sigh :
"What am I to behold his dear face ! To see
The roof where he dwells is enough for me.

Unworthy to look on his cheek, mine eye
With those walls and that door will I satisfy.
A Paradise blooms in the dreariest walls
Wherever the light of my dear moon falls.
That roof is blest with a matchless prize,
For the sun of the world in its shelter lies.
My back with a burthen of grief is bent
When I think of that wall where his back has leant.
Joy through that portal erect can march,
But my cypress must stoop ere he passed the arch.
Ah, happy threshold! Ah, blest above
All others to kiss the dear feet of my love!
O joy, when that sun makes me crumble away
Into atoms scarce seen as they float in the ray,
When I leap from my window that sun to meet
And throw myself down at his lovely feet.
Ah, even the earth is more blest than I,
For his graceful feet on her bosom lie;
And the dust of the path which his footsteps stir,
Clings to his skirt and falls sweetly on her."

Through the weary day till the night brought ease
Such was her bondage, her words were like these.
While the light of her heart in that prison lay,
This is the story of night and day.
Still to the prison at night she went,
And by day her eyes on its roof were bent.

Day after day, week after week,
She looked on that wall and she gazed on his cheek.
She had made him a home in her heart : no care
For her life, for the world, could find entrance there.
Lost to herself she thought of him still,
From her heart's tablet washing all good and ill.
When the call of her maidens rang loud and clear
She scarce came to herself, though she seemed to hear.
Then to those maidens she oft would say :
" My senses are gone, ah, for ever, astray.
Attention from me it is hopeless to seek ;
Touch me and shake me before you speak.
I may come to myself, by your touches stirred ;
Mine ear may be opened, your message heard.
My heart is with him in the prison : hence
Springs all the trouble that steals my sense.
She in whose bosom that fair moon lives,
No care and no thought to another gives."

Fierce fever followed her heart's wild pain,
And the point of the lancet must open a vein.
They who stood round saw each blood-drop spell
A letter of Yúsuf's name as it fell.
This word on the ground, so that all might note,
The lancet-reed of the surgeon wrote.
So full of her love were the vein and the skin
That nothing save Yúsuf might dwell therein.

Blest is the lover whose soul has fraught
The zephyr of love with no selfish thought ;
Whose heart is so full of its darling, there
No room may be for a single hair ;
Whose absolute love through each vein is spread,
In each drop of his blood, in each hair of his head ;
Who forgets his own form and his features, knows
No love of friends and no hatred of foes ;
Who bids farewell to the world, looks down
With scorn on ambition and throne and crown.
If he utters a word 'tis to her that he speaks,
And would win for her only each thing that he seeks.
He recks not of self, and, in all he desires,
His love for his darling each thought inspires.
His former self he has thrown aside,
And each thought is ennobled and purified.

Rise, Jámi, thou ! A new life begin ;
Seek the mansion eternal and enter in.
Thou knowest the way which thy feet should tread :
Ne'er the path of the sluggard to bliss hath led.
Quit self and this being for ever : set
Thy feet no more in the worldling's net.
Once thou wast not, and no loss was thine :
Now be rich for ever, this life resign.
Seek not thy bliss in thyself ; refrain
From the fruitless hope that will bring no gain.

Fellow-Prisoners.

HE who is born to high fate on earth
Disperses the dark as he springs to birth.
For him in each thicket a lily blows,
And the musk of Tartary breathes from the rose.
He visits the field like a cloud of soft rain,
And Paradise blooms on the thirsty plain.
Like a breeze of spring through a garden he
strays,

And the rose awakened her lamp displays.
If his face in a dungeon he deign to show,
Each captive there will forget his woe.

So while the prison where Yúsuf lay
Smiled with his presence and all was gay,
Each prisoner, happy in heart, forgot
The bond and the chain and his dreary lot.
But if ever a captive sickened there,
The weary victim of toil and care,
Yúsuf watched tenderly o'er him till he
Was made whole from the pain of his malady.

Was the soul of any oppressed with grief
Yúsuf was ready to lend relief,
With a smile so sweet and a voice so kind
That the mourner was cheered and his heart
resigned.

If a penniless wretch of his lot complained,
As the new moon filled or the full moon waned,¹
Yúsuf took from the wealthy a golden key,
Relieved the debtor and made him free.
If a rich man dreamed a sad dream and was caught
In the threatening whirlpool of wildered thought,
The dream was explained by those lips, and he
Was saved from the depth of the surging sea.

Two lords, once high in the ruler's grace,
Had fallen low from their lofty place,
And, doomed in that prison long days to spend,
Had won the love of that faithful friend.
Each dreamed a dream one night, and the breast
Of each was moved with a wild unrest;
For one had the promise of freedom, one
Was warned that the days of his life were done.
So weighed those dreams, both of hope and dread,
On the heart of each, uninterpreted.
They came to Yúsuf and prayed him unfold
The secret drift of the dreams they told.

¹ As the days came near on which he was bound to pay debts.

“Thou on the gallows,” he said, “must swing;
And thou wilt return to the court of the king.”

True were his words. To the youth restored
To his place of honour beside his lord,
Ere he turned to the court from his bonds set
free,

Thus spoke Yúsuf: “Remember me.
If fortune favour thee, time may bring
A happy hour to address the king.
Thou wilt gain thy reward if thou speak to him
then

As he sits in the hall with his noblemen.
‘A stranger,’ say, ‘in the prison lies
Barred from the sight of thy pitying eyes.
It beseems not a heart that is righteous like thine
To suffer the guiltless in bonds to pine.’”

But when that servant his rank regained,
And the cup of the grace of his master drained,
For many a year his glad heart forgot
The prayer of Yúsuf or heeded not.
The tree of his promise brought forth despair,
And Yúsuf yet lingered a captive there.

From him who is chosen, whom God above
Deems worthy to rest in the shade of His love,
All earthly means in this world are withdrawn:
No mortal may hold His elected in pawn.

God draws him away to Himself alone,
And to none but Him may his love be shown.
To the will of another he may not bend,
But on God alone may his hope depend.
No prayer to others must he prefer,
But be God's own servant and prisoner.

The King's Vision.

MANY a lock in this world we see
To open whose wards we can find no key,
When the wit of the wise is of no avail,
And care and quick sight and endeavour fail.
On a sudden, touched by no master-hand,
With no device that an artist planned,
Through a cause unknown the lock open flies
And displays to the seeker the long-sought prize.

The heart of Yúsuf all hope resigned
That his own device would his bonds unbind.
His hope was only in Him from whom
Comes help to us all in the days of gloom,
And, free from self-thought in his low estate,
He was guided by God the Compassionate.

Clear to the ruler of Egypt's sight
Appeared seven kine, as he dreamed one night ;
Each more fair than the other, all
Were healthy and handsome and fat from the stall.
After them others advancing were seen,
Equal in number, but weak and lean.

By these the former were overpowered
And, like the grass of the field, devoured.
Seven ears of corn then were seen to rise,
That might gladden the heart and delight the eyes.
Then seven thin ears, grown each from a stem,
Followed and withered and ruined them.

In the early morn when the king awoke,
To each wakeful heart of his dream he spoke.
“We cannot interpret it,” all replied ;
“Thought and conjecture are here defied.
The dream is a riddle no wit may explain,
And wisest are they who from guess refrain.”
Then he who had knowledge of Yúsuf flung
Aside the veil that before him hung,
And said :—“A youth in the prison lies,
In solving riddles supremely wise.
His wit can interpret each dream, and he
Will bring up the pearl when he dives in the sea.
Permit me to tell him this secret thing,
And the drift of thy dream from his lips will I bring.”
“What need,” said the king, “of permission to speak ?
What better than sight may the blind man seek ?
And from this moment the eye of my mind,
Till I master this secret, is dark and blind.”
He ran to the prison with utmost speed,
And gave to Yúsuf the dream to read.

“Years,” he explained, “are those ears and kine,
Whose looks of those years are the mark and sign.
The fair fat kine and the full ears well
The nature and hope of those years may tell.
The meagre ears, the kine thin and weak,
Of years of dearth and misfortune speak.
In the former seven the kindly rain
Will fill the fields full with rich grass and grain,
And all the land will be glad and gay.
But seven will come, when those pass away,
To ruin the gifts of the years before;
And the hearts of men will be glad no more.
No gracious cloud the sweet rain will bring,
No blade of grass from the ground will spring.
No joy will the wealth of the rich supply,
And the poor and needy will hunger and die.
On the table of Time is no food, and Bread!
Is the cry of thousands who die unfed.”
The noble listened, and straight returned
To the court of the king with the lore he had learned.
To his master the words of Yúsuf he told,
And made his glad heart like a bud unfold.
“Bring Yúsuf to me,” said the monarch, “that I
On the truth of these words may more surely rely.
'Tis sweetest to hear a dear friend repeat
With his own lips the words which, reported, are sweet;

And who is content from another to hear
The words he may draw from the lips that are dear ? ”

Again to the prison his steps he bent,
And gave Yúsuf the message the king had sent :
“ Fair cypress, come from thy still retreat,
In the monarch's garden to set thy feet.
O come, and the court of his house will shine
More fair with the rose of that cheek of thine.”
“ Shall I visit,” cried Yúsuf, “ the court of a king
Who has cast me aside like a guilty thing—
Who has left me in prison long years, nor bent
One pitying glance on the innocent ?
Let him first command, if he will that I go
Forth to his court from this house of woe,
That they whom, at sight of me, wonder led
To wound with the knife their own hands till they bled,
Like the Pleiades gathered before his face,
Uplift the veil and make clear my case ;
And let them declare for what fault or crime
I have lain in the prison this dreary time.
Then will the secret come forth to light,
And my skirt will be proved to be pure and white.
The path of sin have I never pursued,
But traitorous thought in my heart eschewed.
To my lord I was faithful in deed and in thought,
No perfidy planned, no dishonesty wrought.

Ere thus with my master I stooped to deal,
Like a midnight thief I would plunder and steal."

The message was given ; the monarch heard ;
To the women of Memphis he sent his word,
And, called from their homes by the summons, they
came

To the light of his presence like moths to the flame.
When their company entered the court of their lord,
He loosened his tongue as a flaming sword :
" How did that pure light offend, that you
The sword of dishonour against him drew ?
How could you send to a prison the boy
Whose face was your garden and spring of joy ?
Bind chains on the neck of an idol for whom
The weight of a rose were too heavy a doom ?
No chains but the links of the dew should be borne
By the rose that is bowed by the breath of the
morn."

" O King," they answered, " whose splendour has lent
To the crown and the throne a new ornament,
Purity only in Yúsuf we saw,
Honour and love of each holiest law.
No pearl ever lay 'neath the depth of the sea
More pure in the shell that enfolds it than he."

There too Zulaikha sate with the rest,
With no lie on her lip and no guile in her breast.

The schooling of love and his sweet control
Had chastened her spirit and softened her soul.
The splendour of truth from her bosom broke,
And like the true dawning of day she spoke.
The veil of her folly was flung aside,
And, "The light of the truth is revealed," she cried.
"To the charge of Yúsuf no sin is laid;
I in my love for him erred and strayed.
With the spells of my love I would draw him near,
And I drove him afar when he would not hear.
To the house of woe for my woes was he sent,
And my sufferings caused his imprisonment.
When the love-grief I felt was too heavy to bear,
Of the load of my sorrows I gave him a share.
I was the tyrant, and, oh! that he
Were repaid for the woes he has suffered through me!
Each grace, each honour and bounty—all
That the king may give—were a gift too small."

He heard Zulaikha the secret disclose;
He smiled like a rosebud, and bloomed like a rose.
He gave command to his servants to speed,
And back from the prison bring Yúsuf freed.
"In the loveliest garden the rose should bloom,
And not lie immured in a dungeon's gloom.
In the realm of love he is lord supreme,
And no seat but a throne may that king beseem."

Release.

IN this ancient lodge 'tis a well-known tale
That ne'er without bitter may sweet prevail.
When the weary days of the moons have passed,
The mother looks on her babe at last.
In the rock pines the ruby till, one by one,
Its veins are filled full of the light of the sun.

The night of Yúsuf was long and drear,
But it fled at last and the dawn was clear.
Long on his heart lay a mountain of woes,
But bright o'er its summit the sun arose.
To welcome him back with due honour, all
The courtiers who stood in the monarch's hall,
Were straightway commanded to line the way
From the court to the prison in full array.
There youths apparelled in rich brocade
And glittering girdles with gold inlaid;
There skilful riders were fair to see,
On the noblest chargers of Araby;
There, bright as the sun, was a minstrel throng
Skilled in all Hebrew and Syrian song;

And the lords of Egypt on every side
Scattered their silver coin far and wide,
While the poor and needy flocked round to gain
A share of the wealth of the shining rain.

Forth from the prison came Yúsuf, gay
In the pomp and sheen of a king's array.
The stately steed by his hand controlled
Was a mountain covered with pearl and gold.
Bags full of jewels and coin, and trays
Of musk and ambergris strewed the ways,
Thrown from each side at the feet of his steed,
And from want the poor were for ever freed.

He passed through the street of the royal town;
At the gate of the palace he lighted down,
And silk and satin and gold brocade
Beneath his feet—yea, and heads—were laid,
And o'er azure carpets his steps he bent
Like a moon sailing on through the firmament.

Swift as the wind the glad monarch pressed,
Warned of his coming, to meet the guest.
He clasped him close to his bosom: so
A box-tree her arms round a cypress might throw.
He made him sit on his royal seat:
He questioned him long, and his words were sweet.
First the drift of his dream would the monarch hear,
And Yúsuf's words made the meaning clear.

Then of many an action and place and thing
He plied him with eagerest questioning.
Each answer of Yúsuf was clear and true,
And the king's delight with his wonder grew.
"Help me with counsel," at last he said ;
"This dream which thy lips have interpreted—
How shall I meet the woe threatened ? How drain
The bitter cup of my country's pain ?"

"In the years of abundance," he thus replied,
"When the clouds the blessing of rain provide,
Send out thine orders that all shall till
The fields of the land with one heart and will ;
With sharp nails harrow each stony place,
And scatter the seed with the blood of the face.
Let the grain, which the ears when they ripen, afford
For the food of the future be gathered and stored.
In the days of famine each laden ear
Rends the heart of thy foe with its pointed spear.
Let the gathered corn in the granaries lie ;
Then, when the drought and the dearth are nigh,
From the ample stores thou hast gathered give
Enough to each man that his soul may live.
But o'er every business should one preside
Whose skill and knowledge are proved and tried ;
Whose keen-eyed prudence each end foresees,
And his hand performs what his head decrees.

Search through the world for such heart and brain,
A man like me will be sought in vain.
This weighty task to my charge commit,
For none in the land wilt thou find so fit."

The king was glad at his sage reply ;
Mid the lords of Egypt he raised him high.
He bade the soldiers his word obey,
And gave him the land for his own to sway.
He was Grand Vizier by the monarch's grace,
And sate on the throne in the ruler's place.
Enthroned he sate in his seat of pride,
And the people bowed prostrate on every side.
The shouts of the heralds, as forth he went
To the plain, rose up to the firmament.
To every place, as his fancy led,
By thousands his coming was heralded ;
And near their lord, when he chose to ride,
Was a countless army to guard and guide.

When thus to Yúsuf the Lord Supreme
Gave the highest rank in the king's esteem,
The Grand Vizier saw his sun go down,
And low sank the flag of his old renown.
Crushed was his heart by his loss of state,
And he fell a prey to the dart of Fate.

To the wall of sorrow Zulaikha turned,
And her back was bowed as she pined and yearned.

The beautiful palace was hers no more,
And the burthen of love on her heart was sore.
'Tis the way of Heaven in this world of woe,
That its hate is swift and its love is slow.
One is cast down to the earth, and one
Is lifted on high like the glorious sun.
Blessed is he who has wit to learn
How the favour of fortune may change and turn;
Whose head is not raised in his high estate,
Nor his heart in misfortune made desolate.

The Blind Widow.

UNTOUCHED by delight and by meaner pain
 Is the heart that loves fondly but loves in vain.
 Only this care to its skirt may cling ;
 No joy may gladden, no sorrow sting.
 If this world of ours were a sea of woes,
 And the billows of wrath high as mountains rose,
 They might roar about him and rage, but the hem
 Of his garment would never be wetted by them.
 If Fate spread a banquet of joy—a feast
 Whose delight never ended and still increased—
 He would turn away, for the dainties there
 Would not lighten his load by a single hair.

A hapless bird was Zulaikha. She pined
 In the narrow cage of the world confined.
 Befriended by Fortune, in pride and power,
 When a rose-bed bloomed in her secret bower ;
 With her lord beside her to shade and screen
 The tender plant when her bud was green—
 With all dainty things, if she cared but to speak ;
 When no lamp was so bright as her youthful cheek :

Yúsuf e'en then her whole heart possessed—
The sweet name on her lips, the dear hope in her breast.
Now, when from her side her protector was reft,
When naught of her rank and her treasures was left,
The sole friend of her heart, who ne'er changed his place,
Was the sweet remembrance of Yúsuf's face.
She thought of him ever; her sad house seemed
Her dear fatherland when of him she dreamed.
No food could she eat, and she closed not her eyes;
She wept tears of blood and she said with sighs:—
“Beloved Yúsuf, where, where art thou?
Why false and faithless to pledge and vow?
Oh, that again those sweet hours I might see,
When one happy home held my love and me!
When no fear of parting could mar delight,
And I gazed on his beauty from morn till night.
When stern Fate robbed me of this sweet joy,
I sent to the prison that innocent boy.
Unseen by night to his presence I stole,
And the sight of his cheek was as balm to my soul;
And a glance at the walls where my darling lay
Rubbed the rust of grief from my heart by day.
No joy is now left me, no solace like these;
My heart and frame perish of pain and disease.
All I have left is the image which still,
Where'er I may be, this sad bosom must fill.

The soul of this frame is that image, and I,
Bereft of its presence, should languish and die."

Then her breast and her heart she would fiercely tear,
And engrave the form of her darling there.

She would strike her soft knee with her hand till the
blue

Of the lotus supplanted the jasmine's hue.

"I am worthy the love of my love," she would cry,

"For my love is the sun and the lotus am I.

As my love is the lord of the east and the west,

The place of the lotus for me is the best."

She would strike her heart's fir-cone ¹ again and
again

With closed fingers knotted like sugar-cane.

And her hand—no picture could match its grace—

Left on her bosom a blood-red trace.

For a reed each bleeding finger she took,

And, white as pure camphor, her hand was a book;

But the only word she could write therein

Was the syllable grief on the silver skin;

And ah, her beloved would read or note

No single line of the word she wrote.

Long years of sorrow, each like the last,
In hopeless yearning alone she passed.

¹ The heart, from its shape, is frequently by Persian poets likened to a fir-cone.

White, white as milk grew each plaited tress,
And dark was the light of her loveliness.
The musk had departed, the camphor was there,
And the grey dawn had banished the night of her
hair.

From the arrow of Fate had the raven fled,
And the owlet lodged in the nest instead ;
Lives any so old who can call to mind
Owls keeping a nest by the ravens resigned ?
In her eye's narcissus the jasmine grew :
Tears had washed from her eyelid its jetty hue.
Black in the days of her joy was that eye
Which looked delighted on earth and sky.
Why, when her hope and her heart had failed,
And her joy passed away, was the blackness paled ?
From Hindustan had she learned to wear
Nothing but white in her woe and despair ?
With wrinkles the bloom of her cheek was marred,
And the leaves of the wild-rose were withered and
scarred ;

Each line that in blandishment once lent a grace
To her delicate brow now disfigured her face.
In this ancient world who ever has known
The smooth water lined when no breeze has blown ?
But there ever were wrinkles and lines to deform
Her face's soft splendour in calm or in storm.

Grief had bent down the cypress once stately and proud,
And her head like a ring to her foot was bowed—
Weighed down by its burthen it lay on her feet,
Like a ring on the door where the happy ones meet.
When no longer the blessing of sight remained
On this earth with the blood of the dead distained,
She bowed down her back and she bent her head
As if seeking the treasure which long had fled.
Slowly and sadly the years came round:
Her foot was unringed and her head uncrowned.
There gleamed on her shoulder no satin's sheen,
No precious gems in her ears were seen.
On her neck was no collar of costly stone ;
No gold-wrought veil o'er her cheek was thrown.
On the cold bare earth for a bed she lay,
And the cheek once so dainty was pillowed on clay.
Ah, earth, with his love, were a pleasanter bed
Than a silken couch by a Houri spread !
Yes, a jewelled pillow from Paradise seemed
The brick under her cheek when of him she dreamed.

In this sorrow, of which but a part is sung
In the vocal pearls which my pen has strung,
His name was all that her lips could speak,
The only comfort her soul might seek.
While yet she had treasures, a wealth untold
Of jewels and silver, of pearl and gold,

Her gold and silver she cast at the feet
Of her who some tale of her love would repeat,
And her pearls and her jewels she gave to each
Who poured forth those jewels and pearls of speech ;
But her gold and silver, her pearls, and her vast
Treasure of jewels were spent at last.

With a woollen gown and a girdle rent
From the bark of the palm she was then content.
Then all on the knee of deep silence fell :
No more of Yúsuf she heard them tell.
No longer came the sweet tidings to cheer
Her lonely heart through the path of her ear.

That this food of her life might be still supplied
She built her a hut by the highway side,
That her ear might catch—and the hope was sweet—
The measured tread of his escort's feet.

Ah, poor, unhappy, deserted soul,
From whose hand has fallen the rein of control !
From the love of her darling by Fate debarred,
The voice of her longing was tuneless and hard.
No breath from her love might be wafted to her,
No tidings be learnt from a messenger.

Oft would she question the wind if it knew
Aught of her love, and the bird as it flew.
Whenever a traveller passed the place
With the dust of the road on his weary face,

She would wash that brow, she would bathe those feet,
For they came from his home to her lone retreat.
If her lord and king by her cottage passed,
No look on his face had she power to cast,
Content with the sound of his horse's tread,
And the dust of his path on her happy head.

The Cottage of Reeds.

A COTTAGE of reeds had she built by the side
 Of the way where Yúsuf was wont to ride ;
 And with reeds that uttered a plaintive sound
 Like the voice of a flute, she had fenced it round.
 Whenever she uttered her wail and cry,
 Each reed in concert gave sigh for sigh.
 When the fire of absence consumed her, the seeds
 Of the wild flame fell on the pitying reeds.
 Heart-broken she dwelt in that hut, nor stirred
 From the place where she lay like a wounded bird.
 Yet the thought of her love was so sweet a pain
 That each reed was to her like a sugar-cane.

In his stalls had Yúsuf a fairy steed,
 A courser through space of no earthly breed ;
 Swift as the heavens, and black and white
 With a thousand patches of day and night ;
 Now a jetty spot, now a starry blaze,
 Like Time with succession of nights and days.
 With his tail the heavenly Virgo's hair,
 With his hoof the moon, was afraid to compare.

Each foot with a golden new moon was shod,
And the stars of its nails struck the earth as he trod.
When his hoof smote sharp on the rugged flint
A planet flashed forth from the new moon's dint;
And a new moon rose in the sky when a shoe
From the galloping foot of the courser flew.
Like an arrow shot through its side in the chase,
He outstripped the game in the deadly race.
At a single bound he would spring, unpressed,
With the lightning's speed from the east to the west.
As he lifted the dust with his foot the wind
Of the rushing tempest was left behind.
If the road he traversed was dank and wet,
On his coat you would see not a drop of sweat.
But oft would his paces be gentle and slow,
As the big drops combine till the torrents flow.
Now, a flying treasure, away would he dash
O'er the plain, untouched by the snake¹ of the lash.
Had he loved to rest in his quiet stall,
The heavens had served him, a careful thrall;
Had quenched his thirst from the fount of the sun,
With the urn of the moon, when his course was run.
They had fed him with Virgo's gold barley, and hay
Gleaned from the field of the Milky Way.²

¹ An allusion to the serpent which is said to guard hidden treasure.

² *Kahkashán*, its Persian name, means literally "Hay-Attractor."

A sieve for his use they had bidden prepare,
Each year and month, of a comet's hair;
And the birds who sing praise at the break of morn
From the Lote tree ¹ had flocked to pick stones from
his corn.

On his back for a saddle the Scales had been flung,
And a new moon each side for his stirrup hung.
When Yúsuf mounted, the moon bestrode
The Scales his saddle and forth he rode.
At the touch of that thigh the proud courser neighed,
And his thoughts no more from the journey strayed.
The neigh of the charger rang clear and loud,
And the drum of departure was shouts from the crowd;
And like planets grouped round the moon a ring
Of courtiers gathered about their king.

From her cottage of reeds came Zulaikha out
When she knew of his coming and heard them shout.
In grief and anguish of heart by the side
Of the road he would travel she sate and cried.
When the host that preceded his courser was near
Loud rang the voices of boys with a cheer:
"Look, Yúsuf himself, whom the sun in the sky
And the bright moon envy, is nigh, is nigh."
Zulaikha answered: "Mine eyes are blind,
But no trace of Yúsuf 'mid these I find.

¹ The Sidra or Lote tree in Paradise.

Mock me not, darlings ! oh, spare me the pain,
No breath from Yúsuf has reached my brain.
The musk of Tartary scents the place
That is blest with the light of his lovely face,
And when he sits in his litter, thence
A precious perfume pervades the sense."

Nearer and nearer, 'mid loud acclaim,
Of hearts that were jubilant, Yúsuf came.
They called to Zulaikha :—"The guards are nigh,
But no trace of Yúsuf has met our eye."
"Strive not to deceive me," Zulaikha replied;
"My darling's coming ye may not hide.
Can the coming of one who was born to wield
The sceptre of sway o'er each soul be concealed ?
The breath of his fragrance gives life to the whole
Of this world of ours and each single soul ;
And the presence of him who gives life is made known
To the poor thirsty soul that must perish alone."

When Zulaikha, long buried in darkness and gloom,
Heard the shout of the escort, "Make room, make room!"
A loud cry she uttered : "Rejected, forlorn,
A long age of absence my spirit has borne.
I can suffer no more : I have had my full share :
Loss of patience is now the sole loss I may bear.
Far better, for ever excluded from bliss,
To fly from myself than to linger like this."

Thus cried Zulaikha, then sank and lay
Unconscious awhile, all her senses astray.
That cup of unconsciousness still she kept,
As, oblivious of self, to her cottage she crept.
Then rose the shrill wail as her sad heart bled,
And the reeds sighed in tune with the strain she led.
Thus passed in her sorrow the time away,
And this was the task of each mournful day.

The Convert.

NEVER content is the lover; each hour
His longing waxes in strength and power.
Ne'er to one wish for two moments true,
A joy still dearer he holds in view.
He would look on the rose when he breathes her
 scent,
And pluck the fair flower when the stem is bent.
 Zulaikha had sate by the way, but now
She would lift her eyes to his cheek and brow.
At the foot of the image to which she had prayed
From the days of childhood her head she laid:
"O thou to whom praying I turn me, before
Whose feet I have loved thy dear might to adore;
I have served thee devoutly from youth's early day;
But the gem of my sight has been taken away.
Cast a pitying look on my ruin; restore
The light of mine eyes that I sorrow no more.
Between Yúsuf and me must there still be a bar?
Oh, let me but see him—one look from afar.

This prayer—thou art mighty ; this one wish fulfil ;
Give this, and then deal with me after thy will.
What is life to a wretch who must hopelessly pine ?
Far better were death than a life like mine."

Thus cried Zulaikha. She laid down her head,
And wet was the ground with the tears she shed.

To his throne in the east rose the Lord of Day,
And the steed of Yúsuf was heard to neigh.
She came from her cottage in beggar's weed
To the narrowest turn in the way of the steed,
With raised hand acted the mendicant's part,
And made a low moan from the ground of her heart.
Before their master, the horsemen's cry,
"Make room, make room !" went up to the sky ;
And the tread and tramp of the mighty throng,
And the neighing of steeds as they moved along,
Smote on each ear, and no eye was turned
To the spot where Zulaikha sate undiscerned.
He looked not on her ; she rose forlorn,
In a hundred pieces her heart was torn.
Her broken spirit sent out a cry,
And a flame came forth in each burning sigh.
To her house of woe she returned distraught,
And a hundred flames for each reed she brought.
She placed before her the idol of stone,
And to lighten her sorrow thus made her moan :

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“ O thou who hast broken mine honour’s urn,
Thou stone of offence wheresoever I turn,
I should smite—for thy falsehood has ruined my rest—
With the stone thou art made of, the heart in my
breast.

The way of misfortune too surely I trod
When I bowed down before thee and made thee my god ;
When I looked up to thee with wet eyes in my woe,
I renounced all the bliss which both worlds can bestow.
From thy stony dominion my soul will I free,
And thus shatter the gem of thy power and thee.”

With a hard flint stone, like the Friend,¹ as she
spoke,

In a thousand pieces the image she broke.
Riven and shattered the idol fell,
And with her from that moment shall all be well.
She made her ablution, ’mid penitent sighs,
With the blood of her heart and the tears of her eyes.
She bent down her head to the dust ; with a moan
She made supplication to God’s pure throne :—
“ O God, who lovest the humble, Thou
To whom idols, their makers, their servants bow ;
’Tis to the light which Thy splendour lends
To the idol’s face that its worshipper bends.

¹ Abraham, the Friend of God, broke the images which his father and his people worshipped.

Thy love the heart of the sculptor stirs,
And the idol is graven for worshippers.
They bow them down to the image, and think
That they worship Thee as before it they sink.
To myself, O Lord, I have done this wrong,
If mine eyes to an idol have turned so long.
I have erred and strayed; let repentance win
Forgiveness, Good Lord, for my grievous sin.
Because I have wandered, nor heeded Thy right,
From mine eyes Thou has taken the jewel of sight.
Thou hast washed the dark stain of my sin away:
Now restore the lost blessing for which I pray.
May I feel my heart free from the brand of its woes,
And cull from the garden of Yúsuf a rose."

As Yúsuf home to his palace hied,
Again by the way stood Zulaikha and cried:
"Glory to God! to a monarch's state
He has lifted the poor and cast down the great.
He has cast the king from his glory down,
And set on the head of a servant his crown."

When Yúsuf the voice of Zulaikha heard,
His heart in his bosom was strangely stirred.
He cried to a lord: "As I hear her speak
My spirit sinks and my heart grows weak.
Who is the bedeswoman? Bid her appear
In my council-chamber that I may hear

From her lips the tale of her life, and know
Her share of fortune, her dole of woe.
For the words of praise which mine ears have caught
On my troubled spirit have strongly wrought.
By some grievous woe is her heart down-weighed.
Or why should my soul be so touched and swayed ? ”

Two hundred souls, to the king who can note
The truth of each sigh and each glance, I devote ;
Whose eye can discern the light of the true
From the false look of those who deceive when they sue ;
Who honour and punishment justly can mete
To the true light of dawn and the liar's deceit ;
Not like the princes whose judgment, for gold,
In our evil days may be bought and sold.
Each tyrant with cheeks like a guinea in hue
Makes a hundred wretches his mastery rue.
Gold brings the flush of delight to the cheek ;
But justice from gold it were idle to seek.

Youth Restored.

FOR what sweeter joy can a lover yearn
Than to love his love and be loved in return ;
To bear to her bower his burthen of woes,
And find the sweet comfort which love bestows ;
To tell the dear hopes of his heart and repeat
The tales of old time at his darling's feet ?

When Yúsuf, freed from the pomp and din,
Had sought his chamber and entered in,
A chamberlain cried at the door : " O best
Of princes, famous from east to west,
That ancient woman in beggar's weed,
Who laid her hand on the rein of thy steed,
Whom by thine order I bade appear
This day in thy presence, is waiting here."

" Go, hear her petition," thus Yúsuf replied,
" Is she poor and in want, for her need provide."

" She is not," said the chamberlain, " one of those
Who will tell me the tale of her need and woes."

" Admit her," said Yúsuf, " that, face to face,
She may lift the veil of her mournful case."

Zulaikha came in, when permission was won,
As free as the motes in the light of the sun.
Like a bud she expanded: the lips that were pale
Smiled bright as a rose, and she bade him hail.
He asked her her name and her home, the while
He marvelled much at that joyous smile.

“I am she who chose thee,” she cried; “and thou,
Since that one first glance, hast been loved till now;
To whom, bought with my wealth, I devoted the whole
True love of my heart and my mind and my soul.
I cast for thy sake my young life to the wind,
And age has come o’er me and youth declined.
Thine arms for a consort this realm have embraced,
And I am unpitied, forgotten, disgraced.”

From his eye the big tears of compassion fell
As he heard the tale he remembered so well.
“Zulaikha,” he said, “what unhappy fate
Has brought thee down to thy low estate?”

When she heard her beloved her name express,
Zulaikha fell prostrate, Zulaikhaless.
The wine of unconsciousness boiled in her heart,
And the sense from her body was riven apart.
Then thus began Yúsuf, as slowly at length
Zulaikha recovered her senses and strength:

“Where is thy youth, and thy beauty, and pride?”
“Gone, since I parted from thee,” she replied.

“Where is the light of thine eye?” said he,
“Drowned in blood-tears for the loss of thee.”
“Why is that cypress-tree bowed and bent?”
“By absence from thee and my long lament.”
“Where is thy pearl, and thy silver and gold,
And the diadem bright on thy head of old?”
“She who spoke of my loved one,” she answered, “shed,
In the praise of thy beauty, rare pearls on my head.
In return for those jewels, a recompense meet,
I scattered my jewels and gold at her feet.
A crown of pure gold on her forehead I set,
And the dust that she trod was my coronet.
The stream of my treasure of gold ran dry;
My heart is love’s storehouse, and I am I.”

Again spoke Yúsuf:—“Zulaikha, say,
What is the wish of thy heart to-day?”
“My prayer,” she answered, “wilt thou refuse;
But no help save thine can I wish or choose.
And if with an oath thou wilt pledge thy word,
To utter that prayer shall my tongue be stirred.
If not, in silence my lips I close,
And give my soul back to my life of woes.”

“By the truth of that Father¹ who reared of yore
The temple of prophecy,” thus he swore;
“To whom a tulip bloomed forth in the flame,
And from heaven a robe of high honour came;

¹ Abraham.

Whatever thy will be this day, I vow—

If I have but the power—I will grant it now.”

“First, my beauty,” she cried, “and my youth restore
In the pride and splendour thou knewest before ;
Then add the gift of new sight to those,
To see thee and cull from thy cheek a rose.”

He moved his lips and his prayer began
While the healing stream from his pure mouth ran.
The beauty returned which was ruined and dead,
And her cheek gained the splendour which long had fled.
Again shone the waters¹ which sad years had dried,
And the rose-bed of youth bloomed again in its pride.
The musk was restored and the camphor withdrawn,
And the black night followed the grey of the dawn.
The cypress rose stately and tall as of old :
The pure silver was free from all wrinkle and fold.
From each musky tress fled the traces of white :
To the black narcissus came beauty and light.
The halo of youth round her age was seen :
For the forty-years’ dame stood a girl of eighteen ;
Yes, fairer and brighter in loveliness stood
Than in days of her ripening maidenhood.

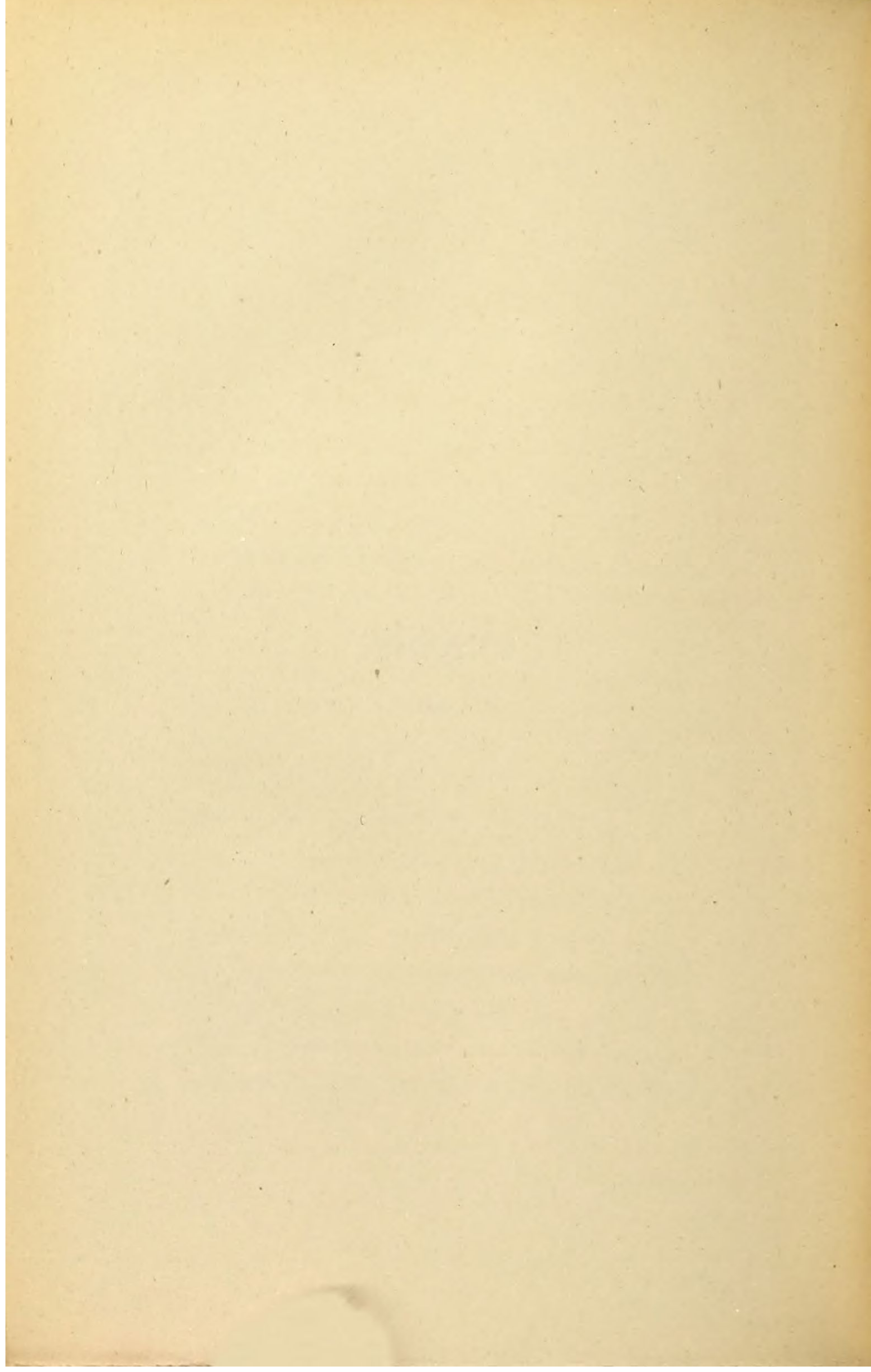
Again said Yúsuf:—“O thou most fair,
If a wish now be left thee, that wish declare.”

¹ *Áb*, in Persian, means both water and splendour.

“The one sole wish of my heart,” she replied,
“Is still to be near thee, to sit by thy side;
To have thee by day in my happy sight,
And to lay my cheek on thy foot at night;
To lie in the shade of the cypress and sip
The sugar that lies on thy ruby lip;
To my wounded heart this soft balm to lay:
For naught beyond this can I wish or pray.
The streams of thy love will new life bestow
On the dry thirsty field where its sweet waters flow.”

When Yúsuf the prayer of Zulaikha had heard,
He bowed down his head and he spoke no word,
To the world unseen were his eyes turned away,
And he gave her no answer of Yea or Nay.
Then a sound on his ear, as he doubted, fell,
And he knew 'twas the wing-beat of Gabriel.
Thus spoke the Angel: “To thee, O king,
From the Lord Almighty a message I bring.
‘Mine eyes have seen her in humble mood;
I heard her prayer when to thee she sued.
At the sight of her labours, her prayers, and sighs,
The waves of the sea of My pity rise.
Her soul from the sword of despair I free,
And here from My throne I betroth her to thee.’”

APPENDIX.



APPENDIX.

PRAISE OF THE PROPHET.

IN my translation I have omitted the two preceding cantos, one in praise of Muhammad, and the other containing an account of the Prophet's miraculous journey to heaven. In the former, the poet begins by assigning a mystic meaning to each letter of Muhammad's name. The *mím*, a circular letter, is a collar and a belt, a sign of servitude :

“ A ring
Meet to be worn by Angel and by King.
Can mortal wisdom learn the meaning hid
Deep in the mystic Há? No, Heaven forbid !”

The letter *dál* is the Prophet's anklet. The poet then passes from the name to the Prophet himself :

“ His sun-bright face that glorifies the day
Lent breath to Adam newly-formed of clay.
Ne'er had the Ark without his high behest
Borne Noah safely to Mount Júdi's crest.
A gentle breath to aid the Friend he sped,
And threatening flames became a rose-strewn bed :
Glad news of his approach Messiah brought,
And Músá from his touch a radiance caught.
His grace a home in foreign Egypt gave
To Hebrew Yúsuf bought with gold, a slave.”

He is a fair cypress grown in the garden of truth,
a bright pheasant from the meadow of purity. High
as the heaven he rears his form:

“ His breath
 Stirs with new life the mouldering bones of death.
 Thick clouds about him their pavilion fold,
 And the sun decks it with a ball of gold.”

The canto contains much more praise of a somewhat similar character, and mention is made of some historical or miraculous events and acts in the Prophet's life.

In the following canto the poet describes the visionary journey of Muhammad to heaven. “The Angel Gabriel (to quote S. R.'s analysis) awakes him as he is slumbering on his bed, and informs him that he has brought him the wonderful horse Borak, a kind of mysterious animal like some of those described in Ezekiel, to convey him to Paradise. Mounting this, he first visits Jerusalem, as the Hebrew Prophets had done, and then wings his flight through the eight inferior heavens to the ninth and highest.”

The poet plays somewhat feebly on the names of the planets and constellations which the Prophet passes in his ascent, and the whole account of the journey is, I think, deficient in originality and vigour. The Persian name of Jupiter is Mushtarí, or the Buyer, and *musht* means the fist or closed hand. Accordingly,

“ From ruby lips on Mushtarí were shed
 Rich pearls that filled his *hand* and decked his head.”

Puns, indeed (if they can be called puns), are too frequently the rudders of the verses—

“ By which, like ships, they steer their courses.”

At last he came to the highest heaven and near to Allah's throne:

"He saw what mortal ne'er before might see :
 Ask not the tale—'tis vain to ask—from me.
 That realm, unmeasured, search can ne'er explore ;
 Refrain thy lips, nor ask of less and more.
 Naught of that place may eloquence declare ;
 No tongue or lip may tell the glories there.
 He heard what mortal ne'er before might hear,
 Mysterious secrets, shut from every ear.
 Unfathomable secrets : as the wind
 Eludes the grasp, they mock both ear and mind.
 Too deep for ear to hear, for eye to see,
 The tongue that names them still for life must be.
 Thy foot, O Jámí, in due bounds restrain :
 Fly yet in time this soul-destroying main.
 No longer dare to touch so high a theme :
 Hush ! Still omniscient is the Lord Supreme."

I omit two cantos, one a prayer for the blessing of the Prophet, and the other a hyperbolical eulogy of Sultan Husen, the poet's protector and patron. I find nothing worth extracting from my translation of the former : as specimens of the latter the following rather commonplace verses will suffice :

"He holds the sea of bounty in his hand,
 And from his fingers streams of wealth expand,
 Till each blest land its happy increase yields
 Of sweet hope ripening in a thousand fields.
 The cloud in thunder, and in foam the main
 Of the free bounty of his hand complain.
 When his drawn sabre flashes gold, the sun
 Sheathes in a cloud his dimmer sword outdone.

 E'en through the night his justice loves to keep
 Strict watch and ward and wake when others sleep.
 Hence the shy roebuck, fearless of attack,
 Slumbers securely on the leopard's back ;

And, worn with prowling through the night, in peace
The wolf lies pillowed on the wether's fleece.

Before his goodness, bright as perfect day,
Oppression flies like shades of night away.
But where the lightning of his wrath is hurled,
A single flash consumes a guilty world."

I have omitted eight cantos which in the original complete the poem. The interest of the story culminates and ends, as I have already said, with the betrothal of Yúsuf and Zulaikha, and the poem in my version will probably be considered sufficiently long. The omitted cantos are "The Marriage," which is celebrated with great pomp and rejoicing; "The Victory of Love," describing a sort of perennial honeymoon, when "set at rest in her earthly affections, Zulaikha feels her heart strongly drawn towards divine ones; and Yúsuf, perceiving her inclination and devotion to her new faith, builds her a beautiful Prayer-house, and when it is completed, tenderly takes her by the hand and conducts her to it;" "The Longed-for Death," when Yúsuf receives in a dream a message from his father and mother bidding him come to them in heaven, and his consequent prayer to God to be taken from this world; "The Double Death," in which Zulaikha soon follows her beloved husband, whose last prayer has been granted; "The Complaint against Fate," which contains some fine passages which I reluctantly omit; "Advice to his Son," full of wise and well-expressed precepts, which deserve to be separately translated; An "Address to Himself," which contains nothing remarkable; and "The Conclusion," in which the poet thanks God that his soul-alluring story is finished at last, and that his

mind, wearied with stringing pearls and oppressed by the solicitude of finding rhymes, flings away the scales from the hand of reflection, and sits down with idle arms from weighing its couplets. After invoking a blessing on the Sultan, the Pillars of his State, and his Vizier, he concludes thus: "Thou hast ended thy words with a blessing, now let thy tongue give counsel, O Jámí. Do no dark deed like thine own pen; wash clean thy book with tears from eyes full of blood; use thy pen only in the service of the beneficent; fold up thy book against all deluding passion; inflict on thy tongue the punishment of silence, for silence is better than aught that thou canst utter."





Dschami

Yúsuf and Zulaikha A Poem by Jámi. Translated from the Persian into
english Verse by Ralph T. H. Griffith. (Trübner's Oriental Series no 28)

London 1882

A.or. 3479

urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb11541849-7